

QUALITY
A SINE
SINCE 1935

JULY
No. 73

CRACK

2
BIG
FULL
WIDTH
PAGES

WESTERN

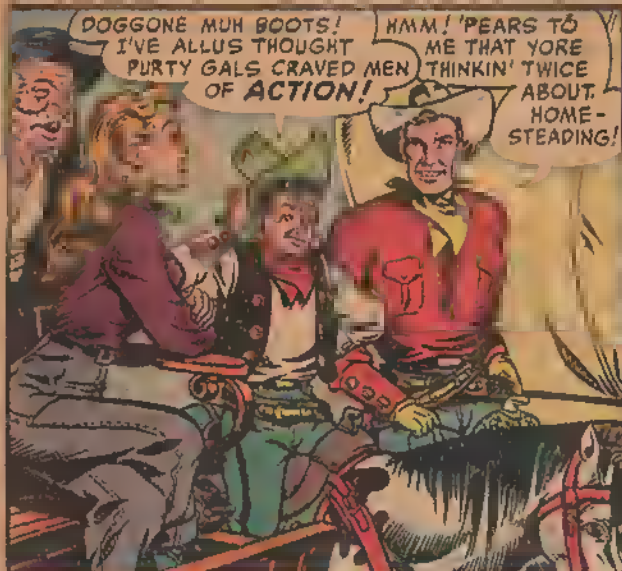
10c

A REAL
COWBOY
ADVENTURE
MAGAZINE
FEATURING
**ARIZONA
RAINES**

also
BOB ALLEN
FRONTIER MARSHAL
THE WHIP
and
**TWO-GUN
LIL**

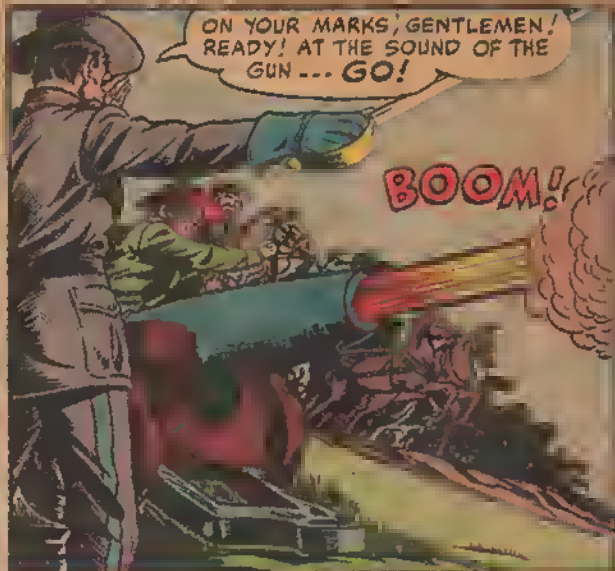


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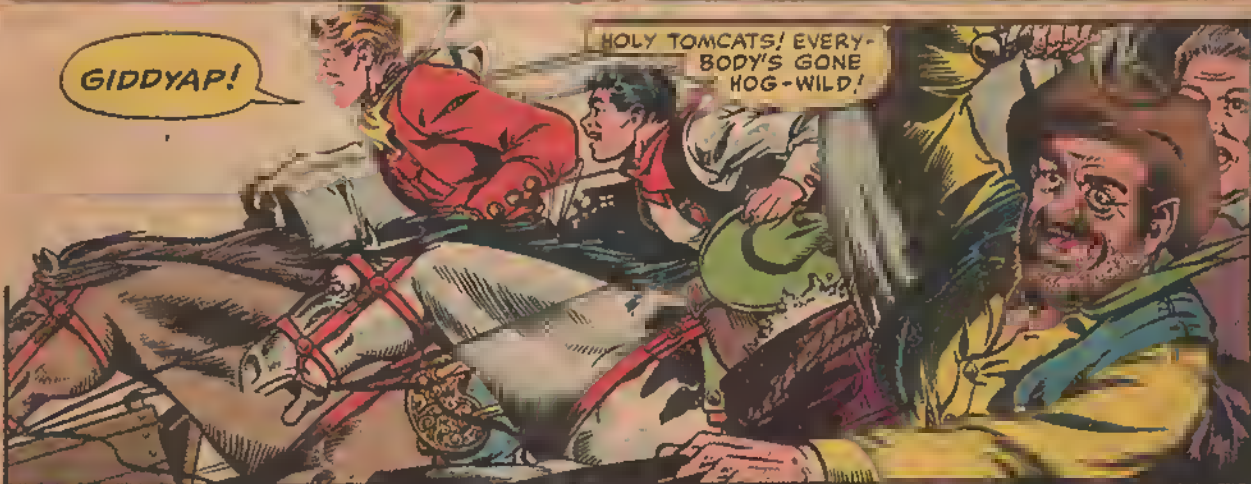
DOGGONE MUH BOOTS!
I'VE ALLUS THOUGHT
PURTY GALS CRAVED MEN
OF ACTION!

HMM! 'PEARS TŌ
ME THAT YORE
THINKIN' TWICE
ABOUT
HOME-
STEADING!



ON YOUR MARKS, GENTLEMEN!
READY! AT THE SOUND OF THE
GUN --- GO!

BOOM!



GIDDYAP!

HOLY TOMCATS! EVERY-
BODY'S GONE
HOG-WILD!



HALP!

WHOOAA!
THAT PORE
HOMBRE'S
OUT OF THE
RUNNING!



YORE LUCKY NOT
TO BE DROWNED!
THAT WATER'S
SHALLOW!

UH-OH! THE
BRIDGE DIDN'T
JEST FOLD UP,
ARIZONA!



YOU'VE GOT A SHARP
EYE, SPURS! THESE
WOODEN TIMBERS WERE
SAWED THROUGH! BUT
WHO'D WANT TO PULL AN
ORNERY TRICK
LIKE THAT? ARIZONA,
LOOK!

LEAPIN' COYOTES! HE'S
SETTING FIRE TO THAT
COVERED WAGON!



THIS SHORE DON'T MAKE SENSE! WHY WOULD
ANYONE PUT A TORCH
TO A HOMESTEADER'S
WAGON?

GO GIT
HIM,
ARIZONA!



I'M BUSTIN' CLEAR OUTA MY
SKIN WITH QUESTIONS I
WANT TO ASK
YOU!

EUHE



AND THIS IS A
GOOD TIME
TO START
ASKIN'!

EEEEYOW!



BUT FIRST I'LL JEST
ESTABLISH FRIENDLY
RELATIONS!



FEEL LIKE TALKING? YOU KIN
START BY TELLING ME WHY
YOU SET FIRE TO THAT
WAGON BACK YONDER!

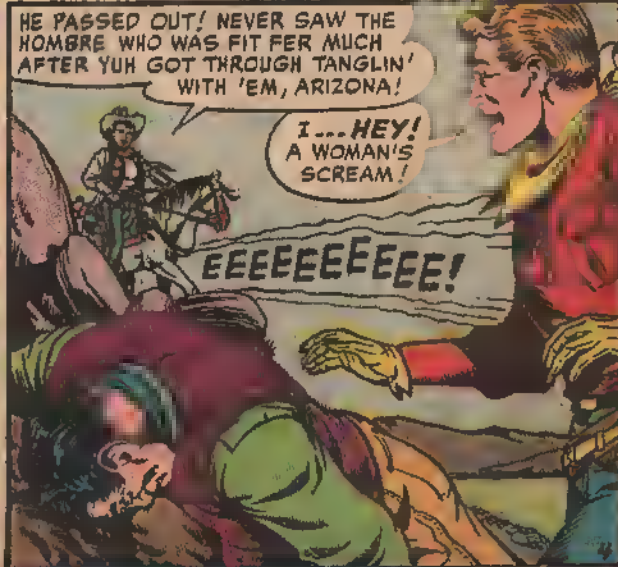
I---I---
UHOOHHH!



HE PASSED OUT! NEVER SAW THE
HOMBRE WHO WAS FIT FER MUCH
AFTER YUH GOT THROUGH TANGLIN'
WITH 'EM, ARIZONA!

I...HEY!
A WOMAN'S
SCREAM!

EEEEEEEEEEEE!

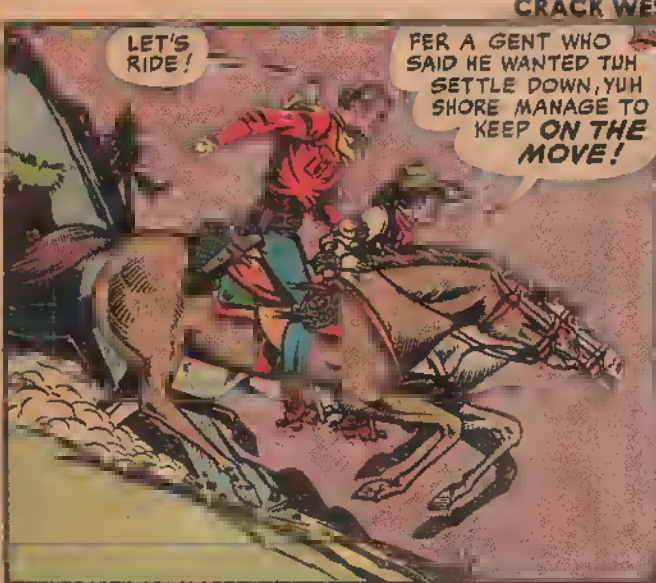


LET'S
RIDE!

PER A GENT WHO
SAID HE WANTED TUH
SETTLE DOWN, YUH
SHORE MANAGE TO
KEEP ON THE
MOVE!

WHY, IT'S THE GAL WE MET
BACK AT THUH STARTIN' LINE!

WHAT'S
HAPPENED
HERE, MISS?



WE STAKED OUR CLAIM TO THIS ACREAGE!
MY BROTHER, PAUL, AND I LEFT TO CHECK
THE HEADWATERS OF THE STREAM THAT
RUNS ON THE PROPERTY! WHEN WE CAME
BACK, WE F-FOUND DAD...
LIKE THIS!

SOME
MURDERIN'
BUSH-
WHACKER
SHOT HIM
IN THE BACK!



RECKON HE WAS SETTIN'
UP HIS CLAIM WHEN HE
WAS SHOT AND FELL
ACROSS THE
STAKE!

BEGINS TUH LOOK LIKE
SOMEBODY'S OUT TUH
KEEP THE HOMESTEADERS
FROM FILIN' CLAIM TO THE
DECENT PARCELS O'
LAND!



LATER, AT THE RANCHHOUSE OF A
CERTAIN JESS CARNADY---

AND IT COULD
BE THAR'S
THE HAME OF
THE CRITTER
WHO'S DOIN'
IT!

I RECKON
WE'D BETTER
HAVE A LONG
TALK WITH THIS
HERE DOC FREE-
MAN!



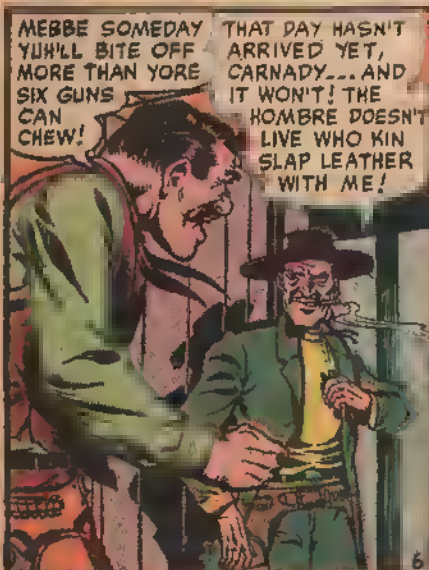
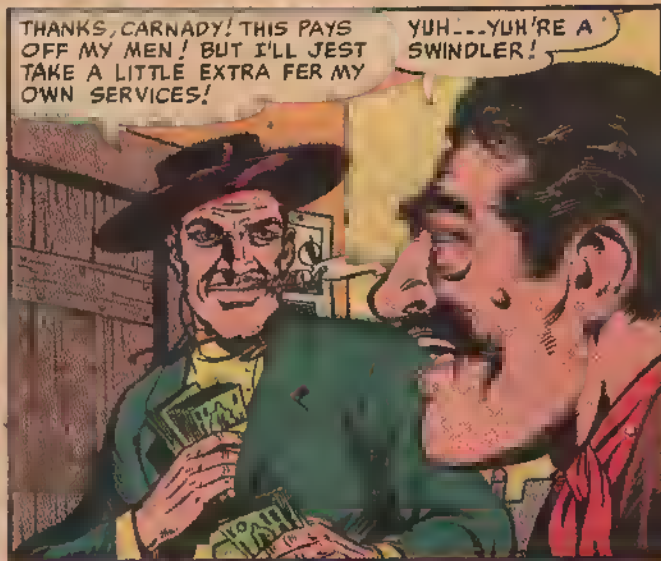
YOU AND YORE BOYS DID
A FINE JOB, DOC FREEMAN!
FILED CLAIMS TO ALL THE
LAND THAT OWNS ANY
WATER RIGHTS! NOW, IF
YOU'LL JEST SIGN
THIS BILL
OF SALE...

I'VE BEEN
THINKING
ABOUT
OUR DEAL,
CARNADY!



OWNING ALL THE ACREAGE NEAR
STREAMS AND THEIR HEADWATERS
WILL LET YUH FREEZE THE HOME-
STEADERS OUT OF THE WHOLE
TERRITORY! THEY CAN'T STAY
AND FARM WITHOUT WATER!





NO MANGY COW-WADDIE KIN PAW ME! I'LL TEACH YUH A LESSON IN MANNERS!

HEY!

YORE A MIGHTY QUICK HAND WITH A TRIGGER, DOC!

OWWW!

LET'S SEE HOW YUH HANDLE YOURSELF IN A FIST FIGHT!

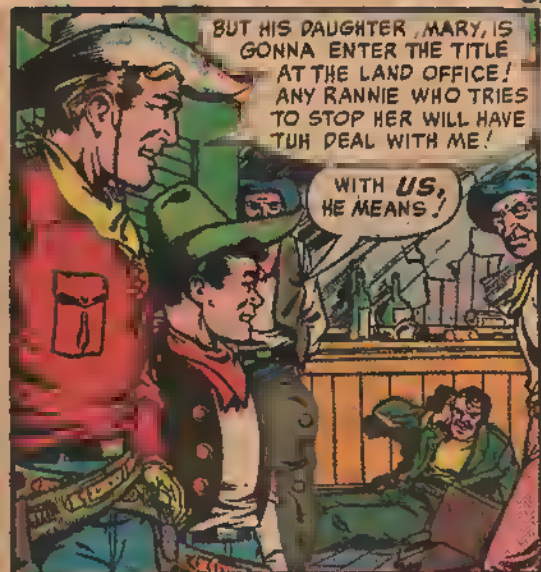
OOOOF!

HE'S BEATING UP DOC! TAKE CARE OF HIM BOYS!

HE WON'T LOOK SO TOUGH WITH A BULLET IN HIS BACK...

NEITHER WILL YUH! AND I RECKON I KIN PULL MY TRIGGER AFORE YUH PULL YORE'N!

I'M SERVIN' WARNING! DOC FREEMAN'S CLAIM WAS FILED **AFTER** THAT LAND WAS FILED FER... BY A HOME-STEADER NAMED HANK GORDON! HANK GORDON WAS MURDERED BY SOMEONE JEST AS HE STAKED HIS CLAIM...



BUT HIS DAUGHTER, MARY, IS GONNA ENTER THE TITLE AT THE LAND OFFICE! ANY RANNIE WHO TRIES TO STOP HER WILL HAVE TUH DEAL WITH ME!

WITH US, HE MEANS!

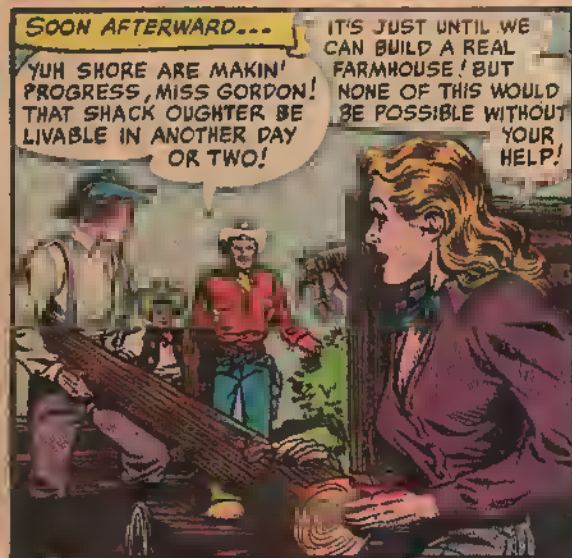


YOU WON'T LET THEM GET AWAY WITH THAT, WILL YOU, DOC?

I'VE ALREADY SOLD OUR CLAIMS TO CARNADY! THAT LAND DOESN'T INTEREST ME ANYMORE!



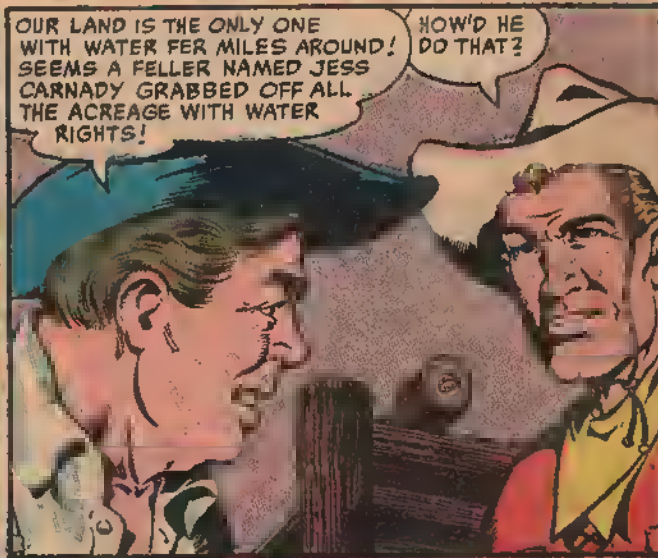
BUT I AIN'T FORGETTIN' THAT BEATING HE GAVE ME! NEXT TIME WE MEET, I'LL CALL THE PLAY! AND THAT STRANGER WILL RATE A COFFIN' ON BOOT HILL!



SOON AFTERWARD...

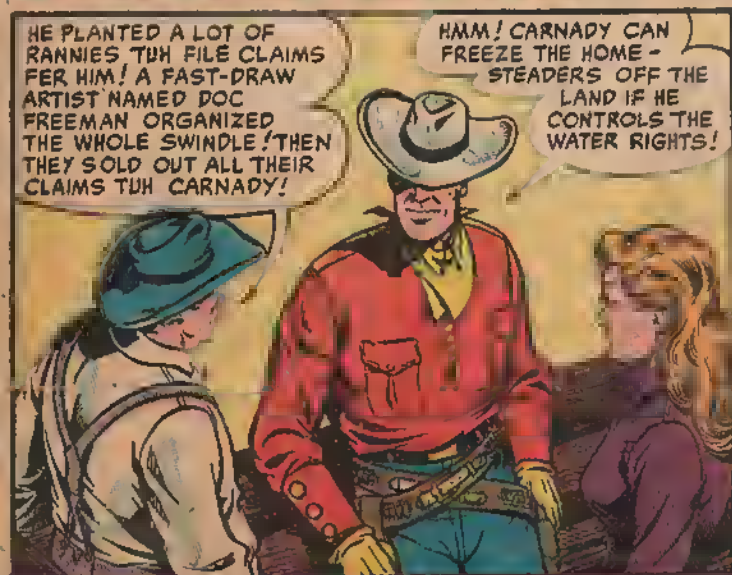
YUH SHORE ARE MAKIN' PROGRESS, MISS GORDON! THAT SHACK OUGHTER BE LIVABLE IN ANOTHER DAY OR TWO!

IT'S JUST UNTIL WE CAN BUILD A REAL FARMHOUSE! BUT NONE OF THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOUR HELP!



OUR LAND IS THE ONLY ONE WITH WATER FER MILES AROUND! SEEMS A FELLER NAMED JESS CARNADY GRABBED OFF ALL THE ACREAGE WITH WATER RIGHTS!

HOW'D HE DO THAT?



HE PLANTED A LOT OF RANNIES TUH FILE CLAIMS FER HIM! A FAST-DRAW ARTIST NAMED DOC FREEMAN ORGANIZED THE WHOLE SWINDLE! THEN THEY SOLD OUT ALL THEIR CLAIMS TUH CARNADY!

HMM! CARNADY CAN FREEZE THE HOME-STEADERS OFF THE LAND IF HE CONTROLS THE WATER RIGHTS!

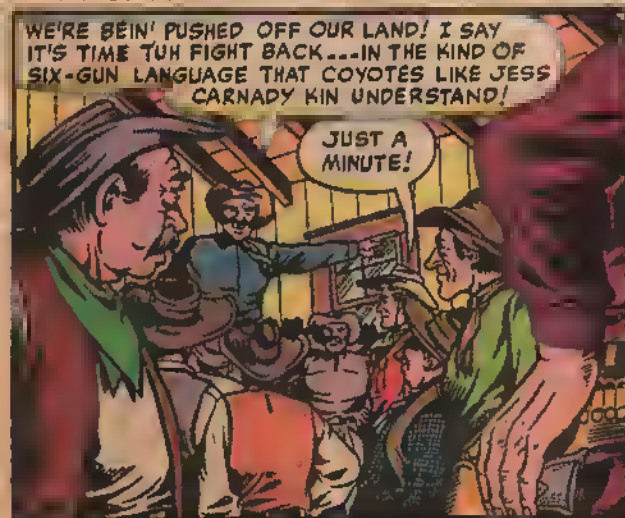


SOME OF THE HOMESTEADERS WENT TUH SEE JESS CARNADY ABOUT BUYIN' RIGHT TUH USE SOME OF HIS WATER!

THAT'S WHAT I CAME TUH SEE YOU ABOUT!



A GRIM CONCLAVE OF HOMESTEADERS MEETS AT THE LOCAL SCHOOLHOUSE...



I'M IN FAVOR OF RAISING A CROWD OF VIGILANTES TUH DEAL OUT JUSTICE TUH CARNADY, DOC FREEMAN AND THEIR WHOLE...

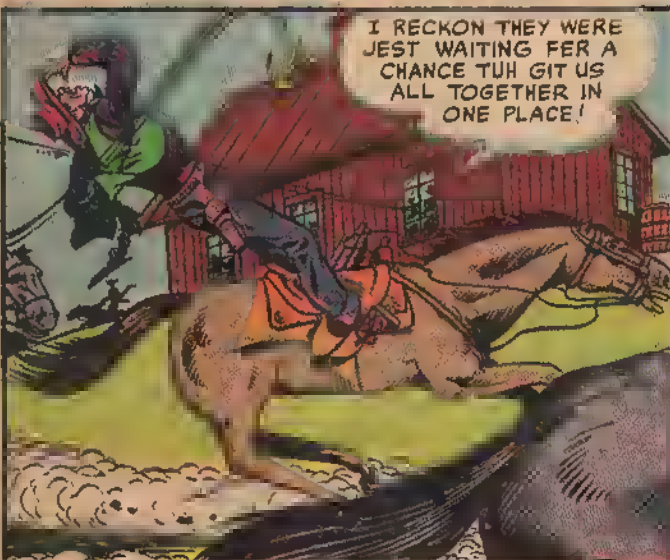
UHHHH!

BANG!

HE'S HURT BAD!

IT'S DOC FREEMAN AND HIS GUNNIES! 'PEARS CARNADY GOT THE JUMP ON US!

AIN'T NO USE DEBATIN' OUR RIGHTS NOW! CARNADY'S AIMIN' TUH WIPE US ALL OUT!



THEY'VE GOT A GOOD FIRE STARTED! WE WON'T BE ABLE TUH HOLD OUT LONG IN HERE!

A LOT OF HOME-STEADERS AREN'T EVEN CARRYING GUNS!



THEY'VE GOT US DEAD TO 'RIGHTS, ARIZONA!

IT SHORE LOOKS THAT WAY! IF WE STAY, WE BURN! AND IF WE PILE OUT THE DOOR, THEY'LL MASSACRE US!

I RECKON IT'S UP TUH ME TO CREATE A DIVERSION!

ARIZONA! IT'S PLUMB SUICIDE TUH GO OUT THAR IN THE OPEN!



OH, TARNATION! ARIZONA
WON'T LAST ANY LONGER
THAN A SNOWFLAKE ON
THE DESERT! C'MON,
COVER HIM!

NOW WHAT'S
HE UP TUH?

THEY'RE NOT WATCHING THE
RIDERS! I KIN SNEAK
UP BEHIND THEM
ONE BY ONE!

UHHH

FOUR DOWN! THEY
HAVEN'T SPOTTED
ME YET!

EEEYOW!

BUT AT THIS
MOMENT---

HEY! IT'S THE STRANGER
AGAIN! HE'S BEEN
KNOCKING OVER
MY RANNIES!

I'LL PLANT LEAD
BETWEEN HIS EYES!
THAT'LL TEACH HIM
TUH... OWWW!

IT'S SPURS! HE AND THE
HOMESTEADERS ARE
ATTACKING ---
IN THE NICK
O'TIME!

YIPPEE!
LET'S GIT
'EM!

THEY'RE ROUNDIN' UP MY GUNNIES! NO USE STAYIN' TUH FIGHT A LOST CAUSE! I'D BETTER HIGHTAIL IT WHILE THAR'S STILL TIME!



WHAT HAPPENED, DOC? DID YUH FINISH OFF THEM PESKY HOME-STEADERS?



WE RAN INTUH A LITTLE AMBUSH! I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO GOT AWAY!

BUT I'LL TAKE THE MONEY YUH WERE GONNA PAY ME FOR THE JOB! I'LL NEED IT WHEN I RUNNIN' OUT ON HEAD ME! I WON'T ACROSS THE GIVE YOU A BORDER! RED CENT!



I AIN'T GOT TIME TUH PALAVER! I'LL JEST KILL YUH... AND TAKE THE MONEY, ANYWAY!

DROP THAT GUN!



IT'S YOU AGAIN! THIS TIME I'LL...

I GAVE YUH FAIR WARNING, DOC!



Y-YUH BEAT DOC FREEMAN TO THE DRAW! I DIDN'T BELIEVE THE HOMBRE LIVED WHO COULD DO THAT!

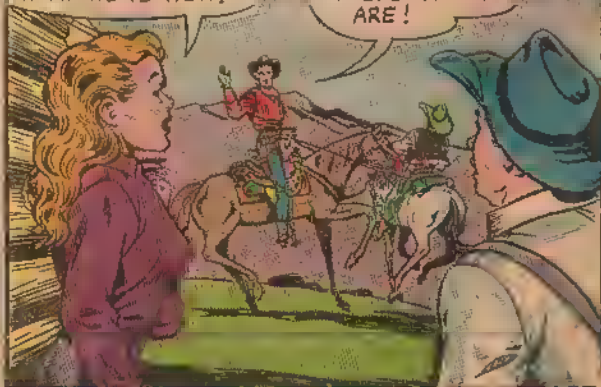
BETTER COME WITH ME, CARNADY! I'LL GIT YUH TO THE JAIL... AND YUH CAN HAVE A FAIR TRIAL! IF THE HOMESTEADERS REACH YOU FIRST, YORE NECK WILL BE STRETCHED ON A ROPE!



AND SO, LATER...

THE GOVERNMENT GAVE US THIS LAND! BUT YOU HELPED US DEFEND IT! I WISH YOU COULD STAY HERE TO HELP US BUILD UP WHAT WE'VE WON!

YOU'LL MANAGE! RECKON SPURS AND I JUST AREN'T MEANT TUH SETTLE DOWN! TROUBLE KNOWS OUR ADDRESS... AND IT'S BOUND TO CATCH UP... WHEREVER WE ARE!

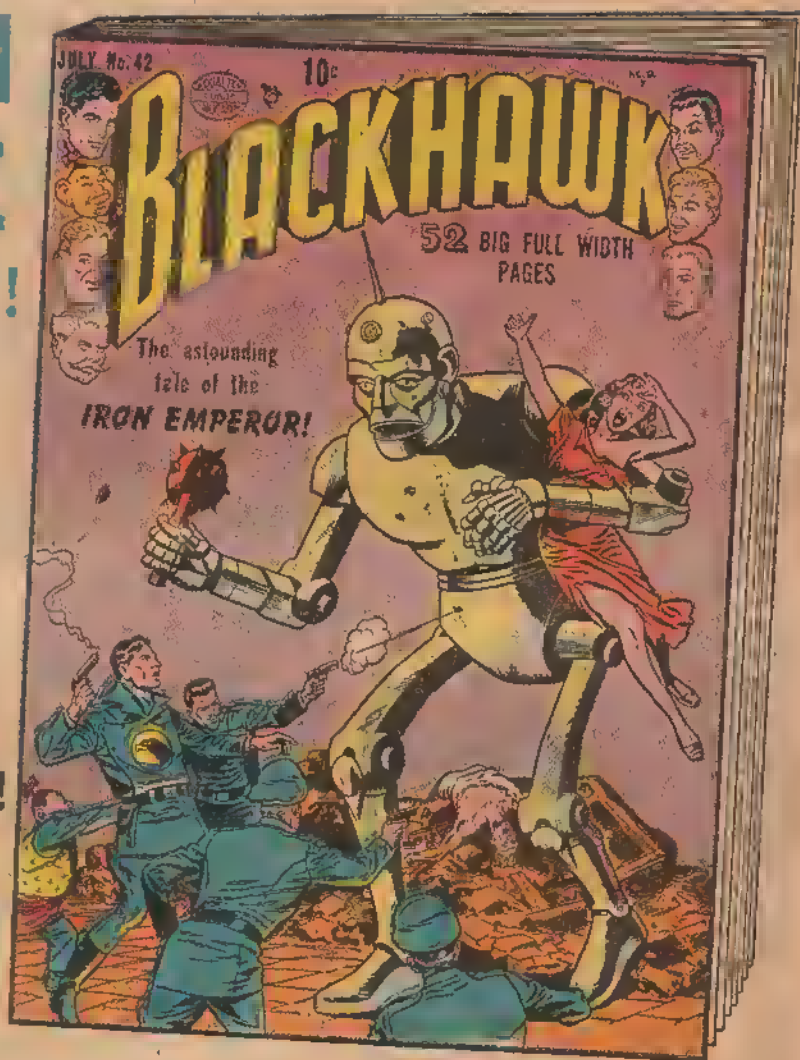


**A GREAT ACTION
MAGAZINE ALIVE
WITH EXCITEMENT!**

**AS TIMELY
AS TODAY'S
HEADLINES!**

**FAST BECOMING THE
MOST POPULAR COMIC
MAGAZINE IN AMERICA!**

**ON SALE
EVERY MONTH**



**52 PAGES OF THE MIGHTIEST ADVENTURES
WITH THE GREATEST HEROES OF THEM ALL...**

The
BLACKHAWKS

The WHIP

WANTED
DEAD OR ALIVE

\$1,000
REWARD FOR
CAPTURE OF
THE WHIP



WHEN YOUNG JOHNNY LASH CREATED THE DREAD CHARACTER OF **THE WHIP** IT WAS FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF SMASHING EVIL AND SUPPORTING JUSTICE IN THE ROARING WEST! THEN SUDDENLY ANOTHER **WHIP** APPEARED, A GRIM FIGURE WHO FLUNDERED WITHOUT MERCY! NOT ONLY JOHNNY'S FIGHT FOR JUSTICE BUT HIS VERY LIFE DEPENDED UPON FINDING AND DESTROYING...

"The Counterfeit WHIP!"

IN A HIDDEN CANYON ON THE MONGALO RANGE...

THAT RUNNING IRON MUST BE HOT NOW, BEN! HURRY UP AND ALTER THE BRAND BEFORE SOMEBODY SPOTS OUR SMOKE!

SURE, COLT! THIS'LL MAKE TWENTY PRIME STEERS WE'VE RUSTLED THIS WEEK!



SUDDENLY...

THIS IS LIKE TAKIN' CANDY FROM A---
YIIII!

STAND STILL, YOU BUZZARDS! DON'T GO FOR THOSE GUNS, COLT!



THE WHIP!
I'LL KI...
EEEOOWW!

YOU HAVE TO LEARN THE
HARD WAY, DON'T YOU?



HERE'S YOUR
LESSON!

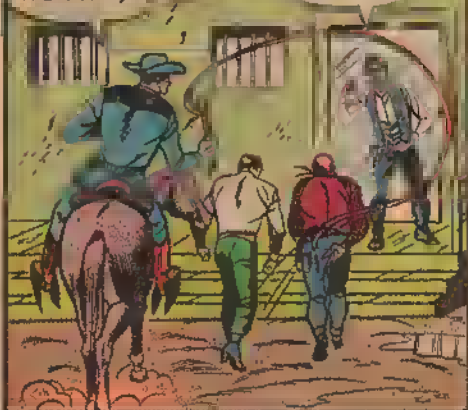
NOT ME! I SURRENDER!
I SURRENDER, WHIP!



Two HOUR LATER...

SHERIFF, HERE ARE
THE RUSTLERS! I
TRAILED THEM AND
CAUGHT THEM IN
THE ACT!

WE'LL DEAL
WITH THEM,
WHIP! WE'VE
WAITED A
LONG TIME
FOR THIS!



WE'RE SHORE
OBLIGED FOR
YORE HELP,
WHIP! WHEN
YOU SHOW UP,
THE OUTLAWS
SKEDADDLE
FAST!

SMASHING
VARMINTS LIKE
THESE IS PURE
PLEASURE,
SHERIFF!

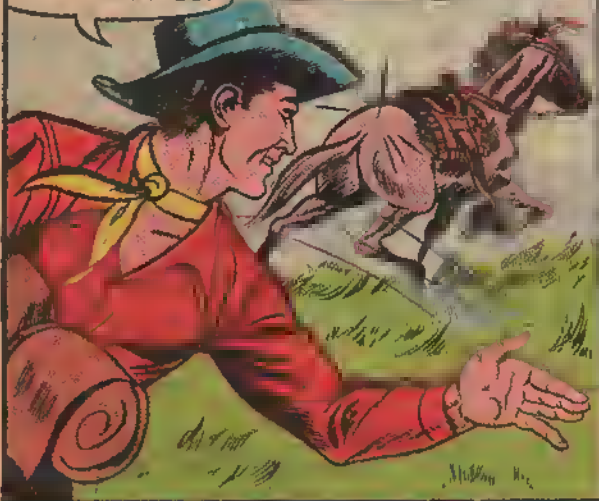


That AFTERNOON, A FEW
MILES OUT OF TOWN...

MY JOB IS DONE HERE! I
RECKON I'LL DRIFT UP
TALASEE WAY! I HEAR THEY'RE
HAVING TROUBLE THERE! AS
PLAIN JOHNNY LASH, I'LL
PICK UP A JOB!



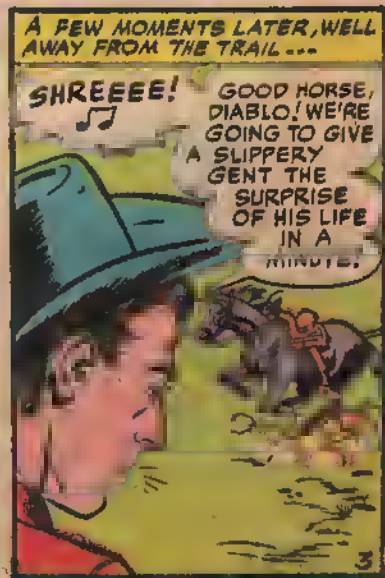
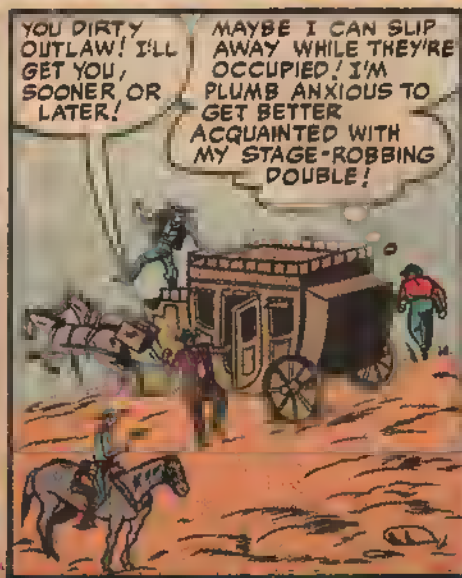
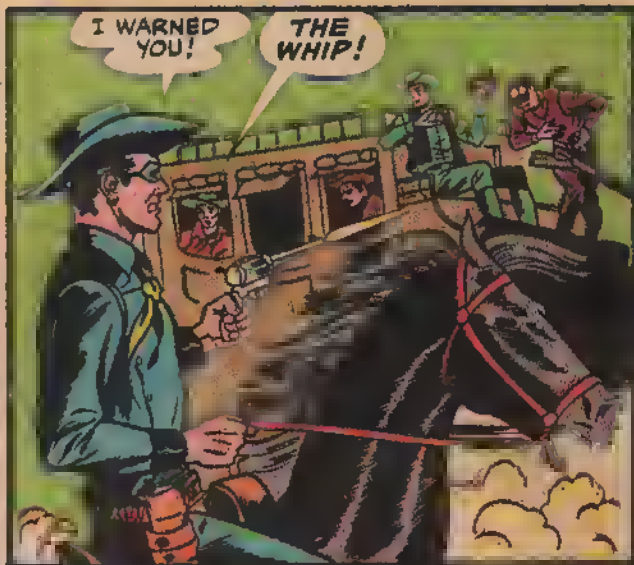
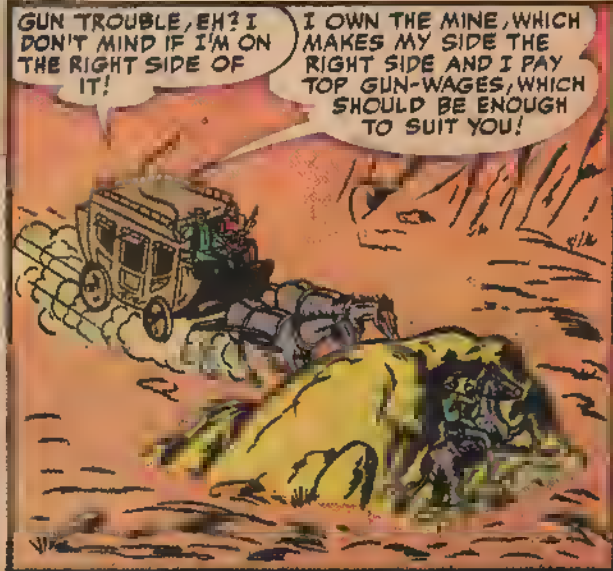
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, DIABLO! STAY OUT
OF SIGHT BUT FOLLOW ALONG WHILE I
RIDE THE STAGE!

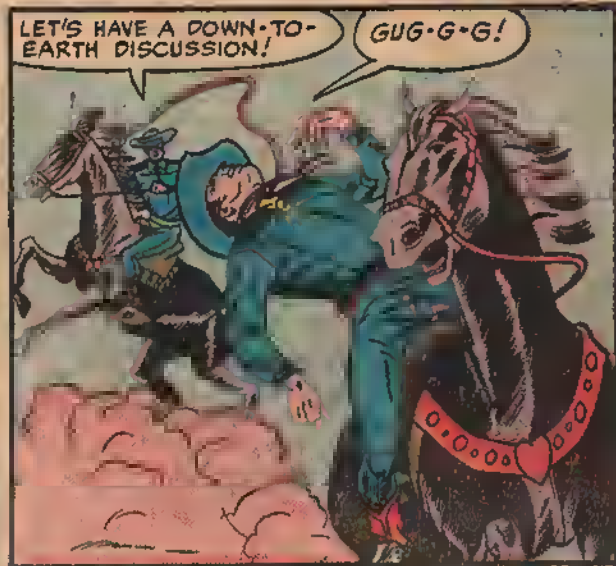
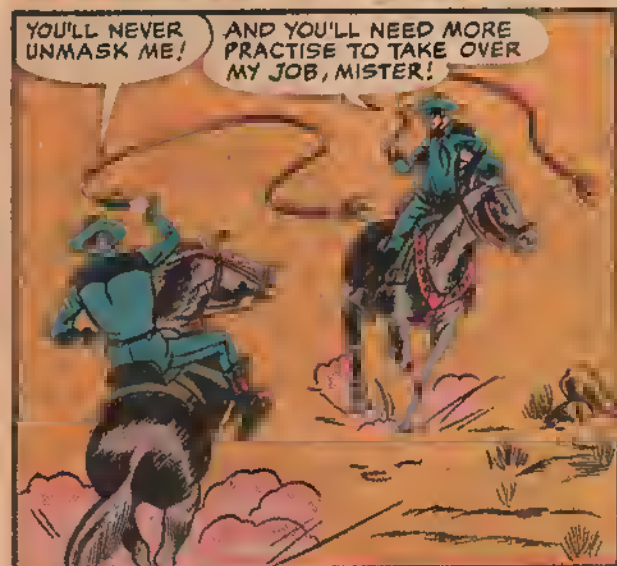
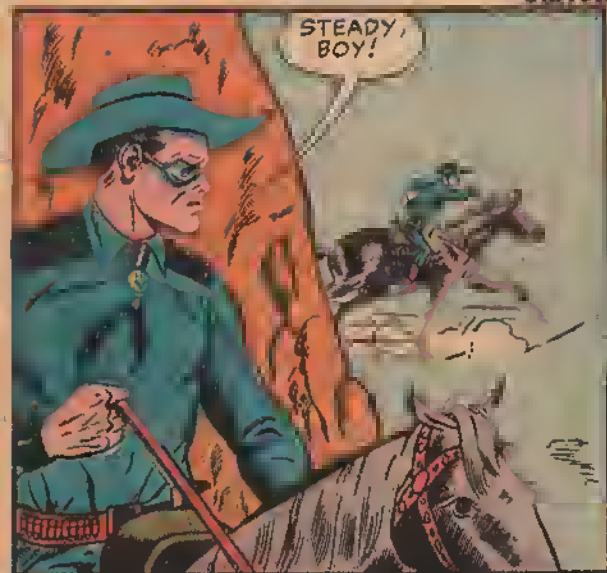


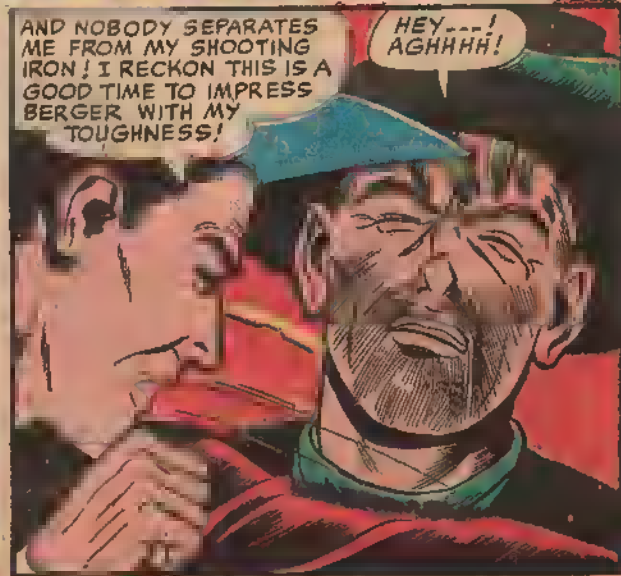
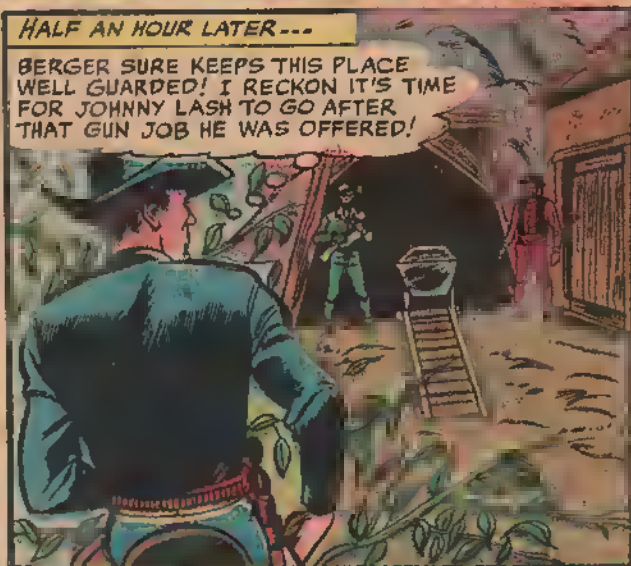
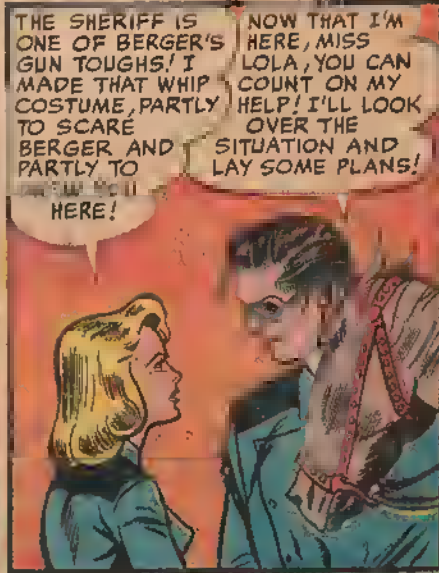
HOWDY, GENTS!
CAN YOU SELL ME
A LIFT TO
TALASEE?

SHORE CAN, STRANGER!
JUST SHELL OUT TWO
DOLLARS AND CLIMB IN!
WE ONLY GOT ONE OTHER
PASSENGER BACK
THERE!



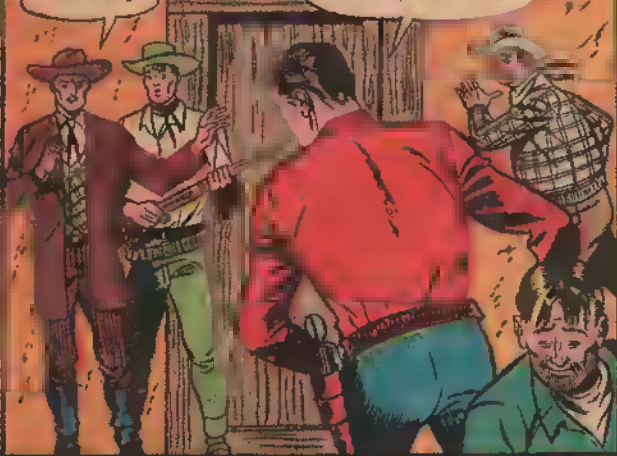






HOLD IT, BOYS! YOU'RE THE FELLOW WHO WAS ON THE STAGE WITH ME! WHAT DID YOU DO TO LEFTY?

JUST TAUGHT HIM NOT TO TRY TO TAKE MY GUN AWAY FROM ME! YOU GOT THAT JOB OPEN, AMIGO?



FOR ANYBODY WHO GETS THE JUMP ON LEFTY, I HAVE! COME ON IN AND WE'LL TALK!

YOU MEAN YOU THOUGHT THIS GENT WAS TOUGH? SOUNDS TO ME LIKE YOU GOT A NEED FOR A REAL MAN AROUND HERE!



WHERE DID YOU DISAPPEAR TO WHEN THE WHIP HELD US UP? IF YOU'RE SO TOUGH, WHY DIDN'T YOU TAKE HIM?

FOR FREE? I AIN'T TANGLIN' WITH THE WHIP UNTIL I'M ON SOMEBODY'S PAYROLL! BESIDES I HAD ME ANOTHER JOB TO DO!



I KINDA FIGURED YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW WHERE THE WHIP TOOK YOUR BULLION CHEST, SO I TRAILED HIM!

YOU DID? TALK UP, MISTER! YOU GOT YOURSELF A TOP JOB IF YOU FOUND THAT OUT!



HE HANDED IT OVER TO SOME GENTS ON MART BENSON'S RANCH! ONE OF 'EM WAS A HOMBRE NAMED MORSE!

THAT'S WHERE THEY'RE HIDING OUT! LASH, YOU'LL GET A REAL BONUS FOR THAT PIECE OF BUSINESS!



I'LL GET THE BOYS TOGETHER AND WE'LL WIPE OUT THE WHOLE CROWD TODAY! THAT'S ALL I'VE NEEDED----

DON'T BE IN A HURRY! I HEARD 'EM SAY THEY WERE HAVING A MEETING TONIGHT AT TEN! WHY NOT WAIT AND GET 'EM ALL



THE WAY THEY TALKED, THEY'LL HAVE ALL THEIR FRIENDS THERE AND NO GUARDS OUT! THEY AIM TO DIVVY UP THE CASH THEY STOLE!

YOU WIN, LASH! I WISH I'D HAD YOU INSTEAD OF THESE DUMB GUNHANDS LONG AGO! WE'LL STRIKE AT TEN TONIGHT AND GET 'EM ALL OUT!



FROM WHAT I HEARD, YOU STOLE THIS MINE FROM MORSE! I HOPE YOU CAN MAKE IT STICK, IN CASE A U.S. MARSHAL STEPS IN!

DON'T WORRY! I'VE GOT A BILL OF SALE IN HERE AND IT LOOKS LIKE MORSE'S SIGNATURE! IF HE'S DEAD, HE CAN'T ARGUE ABOUT IT!



NOW WHERE ARE YOU GOING? I DON'T LIKE MY BOYS DRIFTING AROUND LOOSE WHEN WE GOT A JOB COMING UP!

I DRIFT WHERE I PLEASE, BERGER, AND I DON'T LIKE GENTS TO ARGUE ABOUT IT! I'LL SEE YOU BEFORE TEN TONIGHT!



A FEW MINUTES LATER, UP THE MOUNTAIN SIDE---

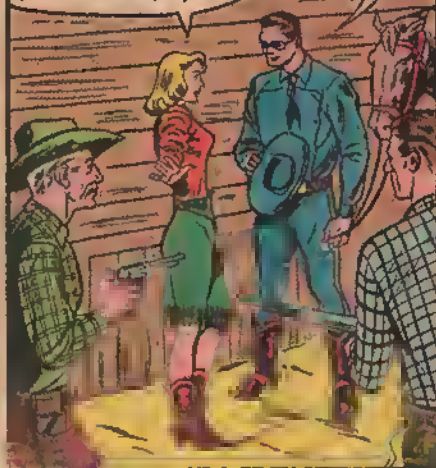
BERGER DOESN'T TRUST ANYBODY---BUT HE'S AFRAID TO BLOCK ME! LIKE ALL YELLOW COYOTES, HE'S EASY TO BLUFF!



A FEW MILES AWAY---

PUT UP YOUR GUNS! IT'S THE WHIP!

HOWDY, MISS LOLA!



WHIP, THIS IS MY DAD, TOM MORSE, AND MART BENTON!

HOWDY, GENTS! I CAME TO WARN YOU THAT BERGER AIMS TO CLOSE IN ON YOU HERE AT TEN TONIGHT AND WIPE YOU ALL



HERE? HOW DID HE FIND OUT WE WERE MEETING HERE? SOMEBODY MUST HAVE TIPPED HIM OFF!

A FRIEND OF MINE DID, MR. MORSE! I TOLD HIM TO PERSUADE BERGER TO BRING ALL HIS MEN HERE FOR A RAID!



WHILE BERGER AND HIS CREW ARE SURROUNDING AN EMPTY HOUSE, YOUR CROWD CAN SEIZE THE MINE! HE WON'T LEAVE MANY GUARDS THERE!

THE WHIP'S RIGHT! POSSESSION OF THE MINE IS NINE POINTS OF THE LAW! IF WE SEIZE IT, HE'LL HAVE TO GET IT BACK BY WARFARE!



THAT FORGED BILL OF SALE IS IN BERGER'S SAFE! ONCE YOU HOLD THAT, AND THE MINE HEAD, THE ADVANTAGE IS WITH YOU!

WE'LL MEET YOU IN THE CLEARING ABOVE THE MINE AT TEN TONIGHT! WHIP!



That night

LET'S GO! WE'LL SURROUND THE BENSON RANCH HOUSE AND CLOSE IN! MAKE SURE NONE OF THEM LIVE TO SURRENDER!

GOTCHA, JESS! LEAD THE WAY!



I'VE GOT TO SLIP AWAY! MORSE'S MEN WILL BE WAITING IN THE CLEARING FOR ME TO LEAD THEM!

YOU WOULDN'T BE GETTING IDEAS, LASH...?



I NEVER DID TRUST YOU! WHAT'S THE IDEA OF DROPPING BACK?

OKAY, LEFTY! YOU CAUGHT ME AT IT! LEAN OVER AND I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I HAD IN MIND!



THIS!

ARGHHH!



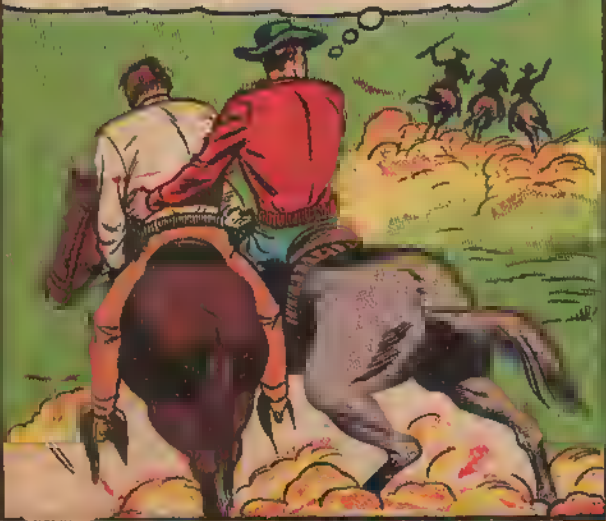
WHAT WAS THAT? WHAT ARE YOU TWO DOING BACK THERE?

UH... JUST TALKING OVER A TRICK, FRIEND! ISN'T THAT RIGHT, LEFTY?

YEAH!



WHEW! THAT WAS CLOSE! NOW TO GET BACK INTO COSTUME AND ON THE JOB AGAIN!



A FEW MOMENTS LATER...

BY THE TIME LEFTY WAKES UP AND WARNS BERGER, OUR JOB SHOULD BE DONE!

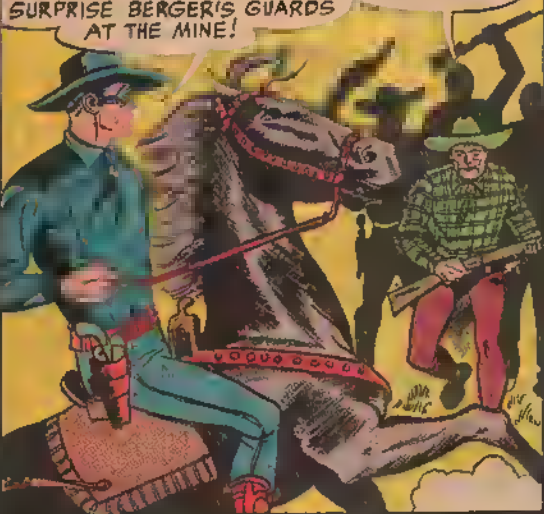


THERE'S NO TIME TO LOSE!
FOLLOW ME AND TRY TO
SURPRISE BERGER'S GUARDS
AT THE MINE!

WHIP! WE KNEW
YOU'D COME!

YOU'RE MIGHTY EXPERT WITH
THAT WHIP, MA'AM!

I SHOULD BE! I'VE BEEN
DRIVING ORE WAGONS
SINCE I WAS A TYKE!



YOU'D BETTER KEEP
WATCH FOR BERGER!
AND TRY TO GET YOUR
PHONY BILL OF SALE
OUT OF THAT SAFE!

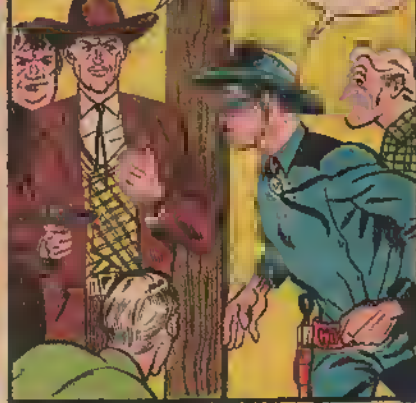
THAT'S
EASY! IT'S
MY OWN
SAFE AND
I KNOW
THE
COMBINATION!

HERE IT IS!
WITH THIS
DESTROYED...

WITH YOU
DESTROYED,
MY WORRIES
ARE OVER!

I GUESSED IT WAS A
TRICK AND CIRCLED BACK!
TRAPPING THE WHIP WITH
THE REST OF YOU WAS
MORE THAN I HOPED
FOR!

DON'T
LET
YOUR
LUCK
GO TO
YOUR
HEAD!



YOU JUST MADE
A BAD MISTAKE

YIHH!

DIABLO ALWAYS BUMPS PEOPLE
WHO POINT GUNS AT ME!

I'LL DO MORE
THAN POINT A
GUN, NOSEY...



CRACK WESTERN

NO, YOU DON'T, BERGER! YOUR GUN DAYS ARE OVER!



I DON'T MIND USING A GUN THE QUIET WAY.

EEEEHHH!

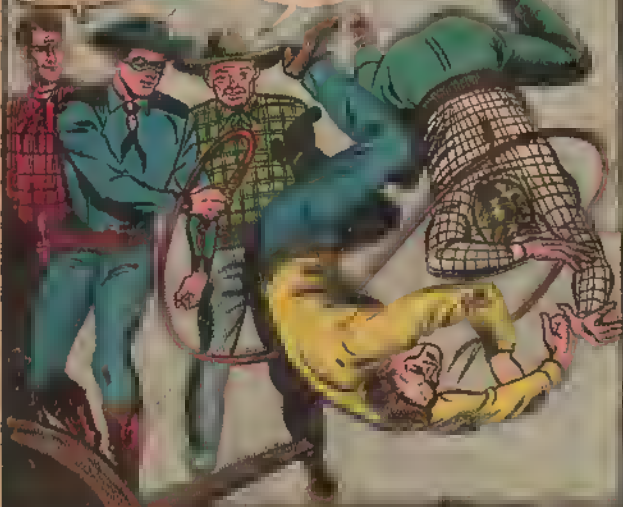


WE'RE GETTIN' OUT OF HERE!

YOU'D BETTER STAY AROUND FOR THE PAY-OFF, BOYS!

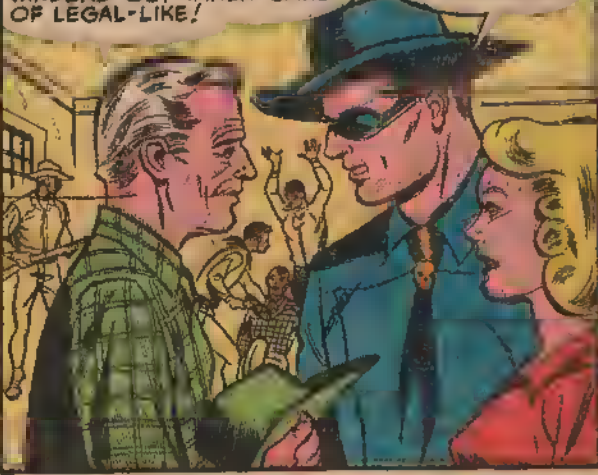


LIE DOWN AND BE QUIET! BY GUM, WE LICKED 'EM!



THANKS TO YOU, MISTER WHIP, I GOT MY MINE BACK AGAIN! WE'LL SEE THAT THESE SIDEWINDERS GET TAKEN CARE OF LEGAL-LIKE!

THEN MY JOB IS DONE! I'LL BE DRIFTING ALONG....!



GOOD LUCK GENTS... HEY!

NO, YOU DON'T, WHIP!



WHA... MMFFF-BFFF!



THAT'S TO REMIND YOU TO COME BACK SOME DAY, WHIP!

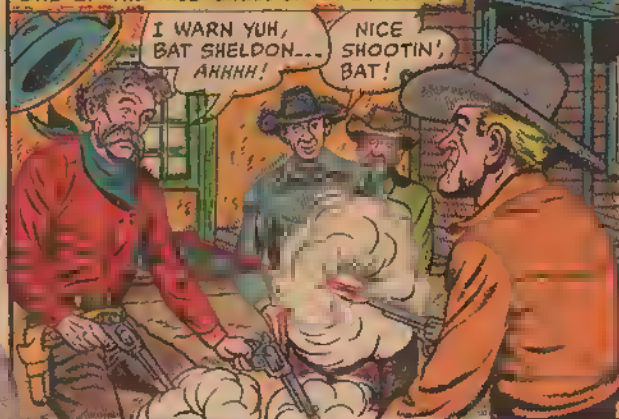
YOU KNOW, DIABLO, WE'RE JUST LIABLE TO DO THAT--SOME DAY!



TWO-GUN LIL



SHERIFF MIKE PETERS TRIES TO SERVE A WARRANT ON ONE OF THE WILD SHELDON BROTHERS!



I WARN YUH,
BAT SHELDON...
AHHHH!

NICE
SHOOTIN',
BAT!

THAT TAKES
CARE OF THE LAW
AROUND HERE!

YEP! RECKON ALL WE GOTTA
DO NOW IS TAKE OVER THE
TOWN AND START RUNNIN' IT
OUR WAY!



DOC SAYS I'LL BE LAID
UP A MONTH, ED! LOOKS
LIKE IT UP TO YOU, AS MY
DEPUTY, TO ARREST THEM
SHELDON BUZZARDS!

OH, NO! IF THEY KIN
OUTDRAW YOU, I
WOULDN'T HAVE A
CHANCE! I'M RESIGN-
ING, HERE AND
NOW!



NO MAN ALIVE CAN MATCH LIL PETERS
BLAZING SIX-GUNS! BUT WHEN A PAIR OF
WAGE KILLERS CATCH LIL WITH HER
GUNS EMPTY, THEIR ONLY HOPE OF
SURVIVAL IS TO WAIT FOR A PAIR OF...
"Six-Guns From The Sky!"

A SHORT TIME LATER, ON THE INCOMING STAGE...

SHERIFF MIKE'LL SHORE BE TICKLED TO SEE YUH, LIL! THE OLD BUZZARD TALKS ABOUT YOU ALL THE TIME!

MIKE'S AN OLD DEAR! THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO PAY HIM A SURPRISE VISIT ON MY WAY SOUTH!



WELL, WHADDAYUH KNOW, BOYS! THE STAGE LINE'S DELIVERIN' OUR FIRST PAYROLL RIGHT INTO OUR HANDS! TOSS THAT CHEST DOWN, POP!

YOU GO SLUICE A GOOSE! THIS HERE MONEY BOX AIN'T GOING TO NOBODY BUT BEN HALL, THE BANKER!



LOOK, BURT AND BOYD... HE WANTS TO PLAY WITH US!

WELL, WE DON'T MIND A LITTLE GUN GAME! YOU WANT FIRST SHOT AT HIM, BAT?



YOU'RE TOO SLOW FOR FIRST SHOT, BUZZARD-BAIT! I'LL TAKE OVER!

EEEEEAH!

MY HAND!



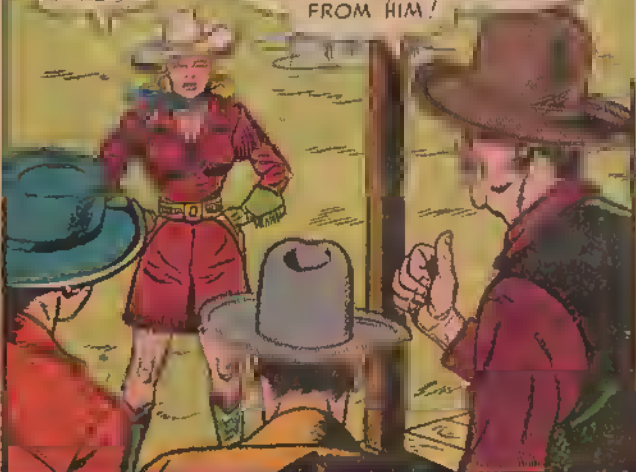
I TAKE IT YOU COYOTES WERE JUST FUNNING! NOW RUN ALONG AND WE'LL FORGET IT THIS TIME!

MAYBE YOU THINK YOU'LL FORGET IT, SISTER, BUT YOU WON'T!



WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU PEOPLE? WHERE'S UNCLE MIKE?

D-DOWN AT THE DOC'S OFFICE, MISS LIL! YOU BETTER HURRY DOWN AND GET THE STORY STRAIGHT FROM HIM!



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

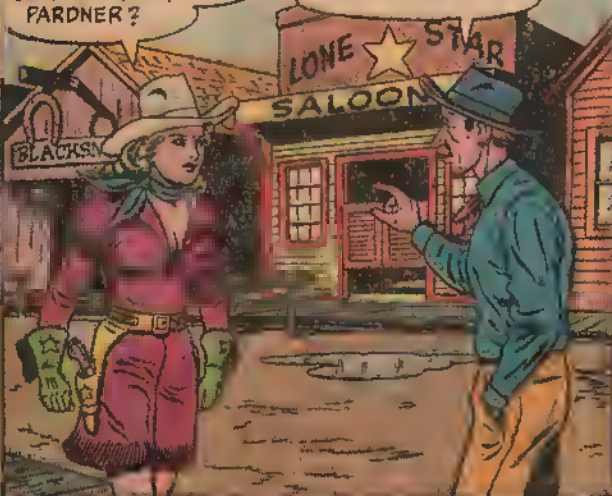
...AND THET'S THE STORY, LIL! THEY'RE TOO TOUGH AND FAST FER ANY DEPUTY I GOT TO TANGLE WITH! WE'RE HELPLESS!

MAYBE YOU ARE BUT I'M NOT! GIVE ME THAT BADGE AND SWEAR ME IN! I'LL TAKE CARE OF THOSE SMART SLEDGON SIDEWINDERS MYSELF!



WHERE ARE THOSE POLECATS THAT WALK ON TWO LEGS, FARDNER?

R-RIGHT OVER THERE IN THE L-LONE STAR, MISS LIL! BUT BE KEERFUL!



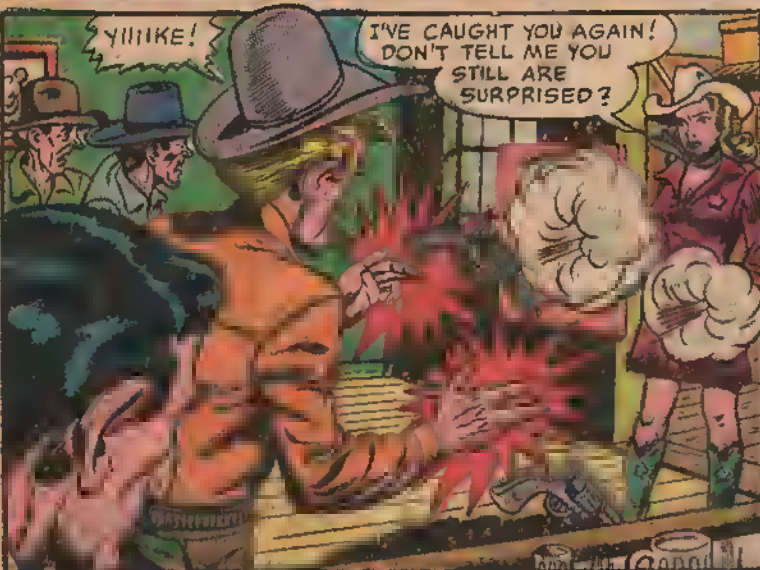
THERE YOU ARE! BAT SHELDON, YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!

TRY AND TAKE ME! LAST TIME YOU CAUGHT ME BY SURPRISE...



YIIIIKE!

I'VE CAUGHT YOU AGAIN! DON'T TELL ME YOU STILL ARE SURPRISED?



START MARCHING TO JAIL! YOU, TOO, YOU BUZZARD'S BROTHERS!

NOW HOLD ON, LADY! WE AIN'T DONE NOTHING! THERE AIN'T NO LAW ABOUT BEING BROTHERS, IS THERE?



I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT! YOU'RE IN THE CLEAR SO FAR, BUT I'M KEEPING AN EYE ON YOU! DON'T TRY ANYTHING FUNNY!

DON'T WORRY! WHEN WE TRY SUMP'N IT WON'T BE FUNNY... FOR YOU!



WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO, BERT? WE GOTTA GUN THAT SMART GAL OUT AND GET BAT FREE AGAIN!

OH, SURE! WHO'S GONNA MATCH GUNS WITH HER? NOT ME, BOYD! SHE OUTDREW BAT AND HE'S FASTER THAN EITHER OF US!



I GOT AN IDEA! IF WE COULD FIGURE SOME WAY TO CATCH THAT FAST-SHOOTING CYCLONE WITH HER GUNS,

AND I KNOW HOW TO DO IT! NOW LISTEN CLOSE, AND DON'T MISS ON THIS!



A SHORT TIME LATER...

YEAH? WHAT DO YOU TWO APE'S UNCLES WANT?

MA'AM, WE SURE DO ADMIRE YOUR GUN-SPEED! BUT WE BEEN THIN'KIN', WE BET YOU AIN'T AS FAST AS MY BROTHER BERT,

OH, NO, MA'AM! NOT LIKE THAT! WE JEST FIGGERED MEBBE A KIND OF CONTEST, LIKE, TO SEE WHICH OF US IS FASTER!

SURE! BOYD MEANS, HOW ABOUT A SHOOTING MATCH WITH SIX-GUNS, YOU AGAINST BOYD, WITH SOME KIND OF TARGETS!

HMM! ALL RIGHT, BOYS! I'M BUSY RIGHT NOW BUT SUPPOSE I MEET YOU OUT AT THE HANGING COTTONWOOD IN TWO HOURS?

PERFECT! WE'LL BE THERE IN TWO HOURS!

IT WORKED! WE GOT THAT SMART SISTER RIGHT WHERE WE WANT HER, BERT!

WE SURE HAVE, BOYD! WE'LL TRICK HER INTO SHOOTING UNTIL HER GUNS ARE EMPTY! THEN WE'LL GUN HER OUT AND TAKE OVER THE TOWN!

WE'LL BUST BAT OUTA JAIL AND REALLY TAKE THIS TOWN FOR PLENTY!

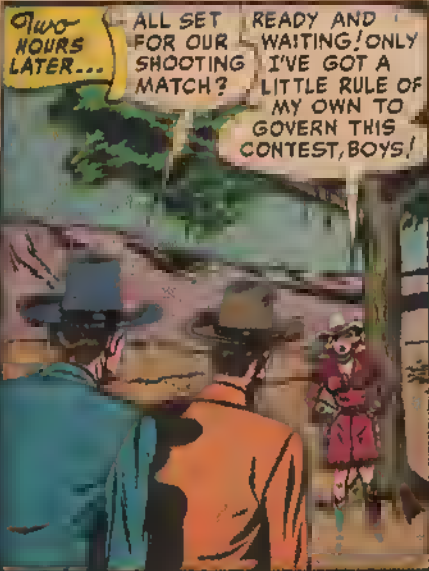
NOW, WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE THOSE YELLOW-BACKED SIDEWINDERS ARE COOKING UP?

THERE'S A TRICK TO IT SOMEWHERE, BUT I CAN'T FIGURE WHERE! THERE'S NO PLACE FOR AN AMBUSH HERE!

THIS IS PERFECT! SHE'LL SHOOT ALL HER BULLETS AND FIGURE WE DONE THE SAME!

I WANNA SEE HER FACE WHEN WE PULL THESE HIDEOUT GUNS!

TWO HOURS LATER...



ALL SET FOR OUR SHOOTING MATCH?

READY AND WAITING! ONLY I'VE GOT A LITTLE RULE OF MY OWN TO GOVERN THIS CONTEST, BOYS!

JUST SO WE ALL RUN OUT OF BULLETS TOGETHER, WE'LL ALL SHOOT TOGETHER! MAKE IT A THREE-WAY CONTEST!

WHY, SURE! MISS LIL! THAT SUITS US JUST FINE! SHALL WE GET STARTED? WHAT ABOUT TARGETS?



I SET UP THOSE BOTTLES! THERE ARE TWO A PIECE! SOMEBODY COUNT TO THREE!

I'LL COUNT! ONE! TWO...!



THREE!



WE'RE EVEN ON THAT! NOW LET'S TRY THAT ROW 'WAY OVER THERE!

FIRE ON THE COUNT!



WE'RE STILL EVEN!

YOU BOYS ARE PRETTY HANDY WITH THE SHOOTING IRONS, AT THAT!



THE SHOOTING MATCH GOES ON UNTIL...



THIS'LL BE THE LAST SHOT! WHEN HER GUNS ARE EMPTY, DRAW OUR HOLDOUT GUNS AND LET HER HAVE IT!

LET'S GO, BOYS! WE'VE ONLY GOT ONE BULLET LEFT IN EACH GUN!



I LEFT A TRICKY TARGET FOR LAST! SEE THOSE STRINGS I HUNG UP THERE? BET YOU CAN'T CLIP THEM WITH YOUR LAST SHOTS!

IT'S A BET! WE'LL ALL FIRE TOGETHER!

WE DID IT! NOW WE'RE ALL OUT OF BULLETS!

THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, HONEY! NOW WE'RE GONNA...



YES? YOU'RE GOING TO WHAT?

GRAWWK! WE BEEN TRICKED! GUN HER OUT!

I WASN'T BORN YESTERDAY... AND I DON'T INTEND TO DIE TODAY!

EEEOWW!

YIIII!



YOU TWO HAMMERHEADS ARE ABOUT AS SUBTLE AS A BUZZARD'S VISIT! I HUNG THOSE SPARE GUNS AND LET YOU SHOOT THEM DOWN FOR ME!

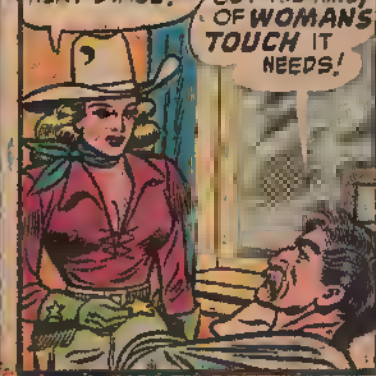
YOU AND YOUR CUTE IDEAS!

YOU FUZZ-HEADS! WHAT DID YOU GET LOCKED UP FOR? NOW HOW CAN YOU BUST ME OUT OF HERE? FOR TWO CENTS I'D KNOCK YOU...

UH-UH! DON'T FIGHT, BOYS! YOU'RE GOING TO BE SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME TOGETHER FOR THAT FROM NOW ON!

THERE'S YOUR BADGE, UNCLE MIKE! THE SHELTONS ARE IN JAIL AND YOUR TOWN IS QUIET! I'M ON MY WAY BY THE NEXT SH-EE!

LIL, DAWG-GONNIT! I SHORE WISH YOU'D STAY AND TAKE THAT DEPUTY'S JOB PERMANENT! YOU GOT THE KIND OF WOMAN'S TOUCH IT NEEDS!



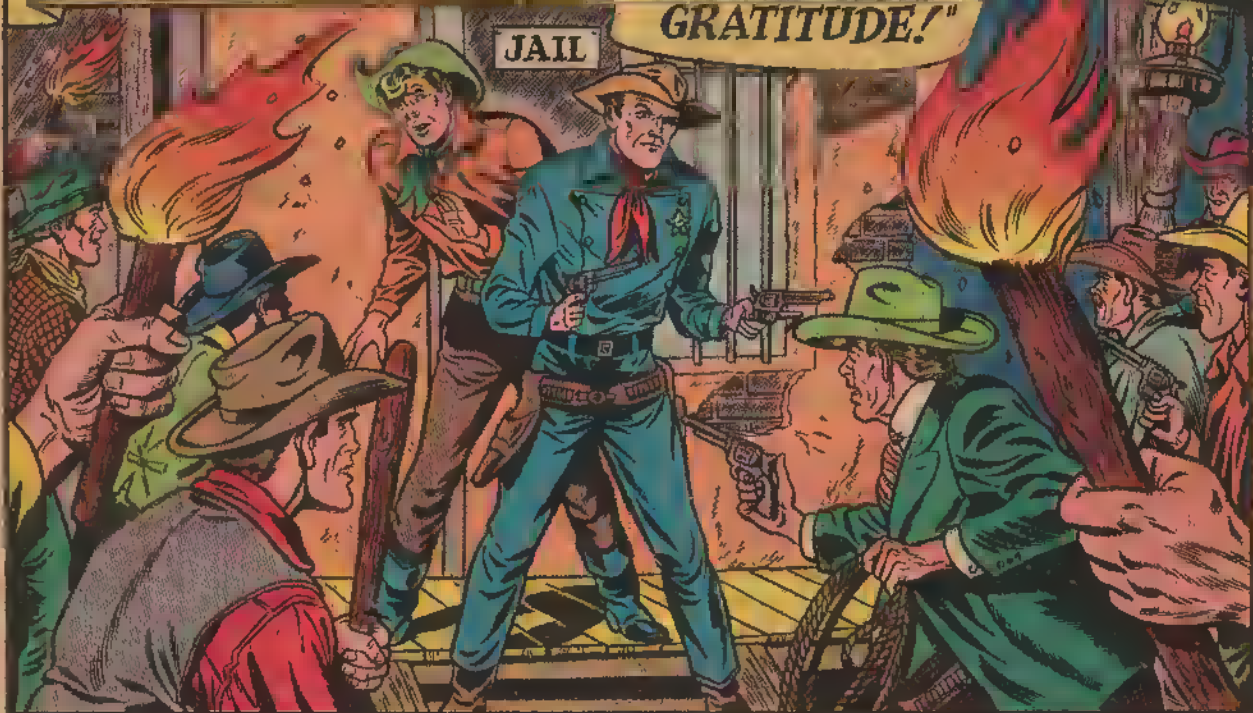
Bob Allen

Frontier Marshal

IN A COUNTRY WHERE EVERYBODY GAMBLED, THEY SAID MARSHAL BOB ALLEN WAS NO GAMBLER! NEITHER THE CARDS NOR THE ROULETTE WHEELS COULD LURE HIM FROM HIS DUTY! BUT WHEN THE CHIPS WERE DOWN, THE FRONTIER MARSHAL WAS READY TO GAMBLE HIS LIFE ON A ---

"GUN-SLINGER'S GRATITUDE!"

JAIL



BANKER SAM WESTLEY LIVES ONLY A FEW DOORS FROM HIS BANK!

SAM! WHAT IS IT? WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP AT THIS HOUR?

I JUST SAW A LIGHT FLICKERING IN THE BANK! SOMEBODY'S BROKEN IN!



DON'T GO DOWN THERE, SAM WESTLEY! GET MARSHAL ALLEN!

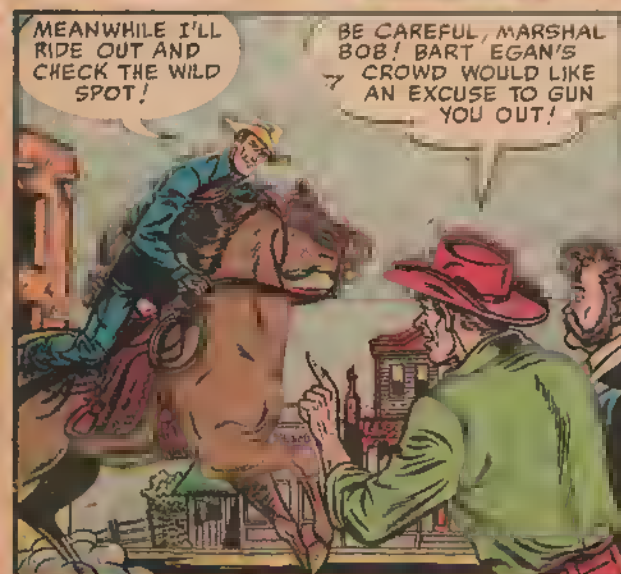
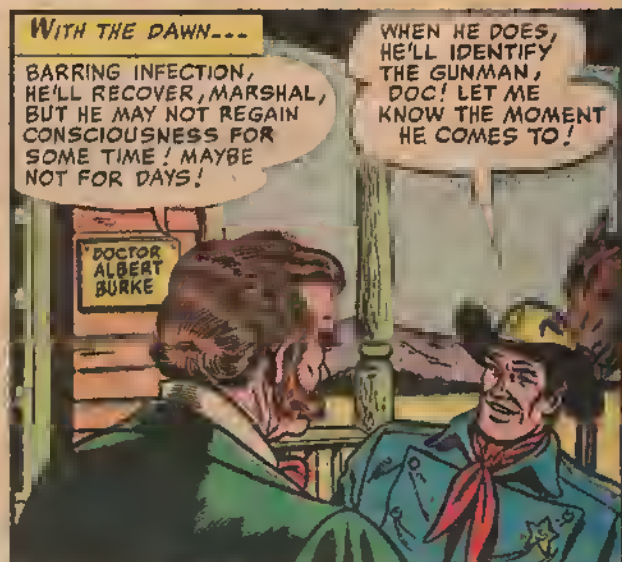
YOU RUN FOR THE MARSHAL, SARAH! I'M NOT LETTING ANY DIRTY BANDIT GET AWAY WITH THE TOWN'S MONEY!

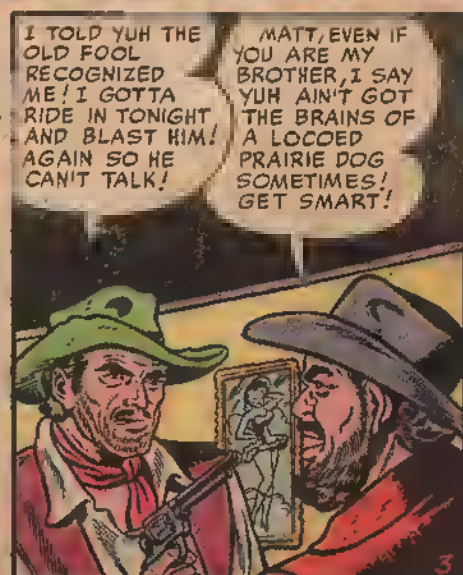
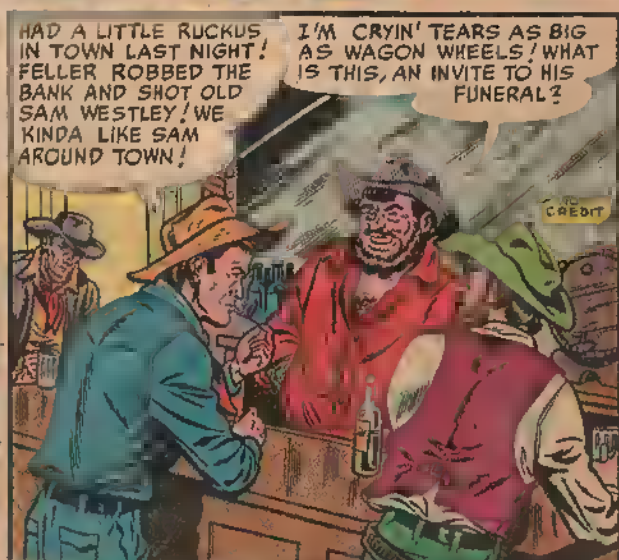
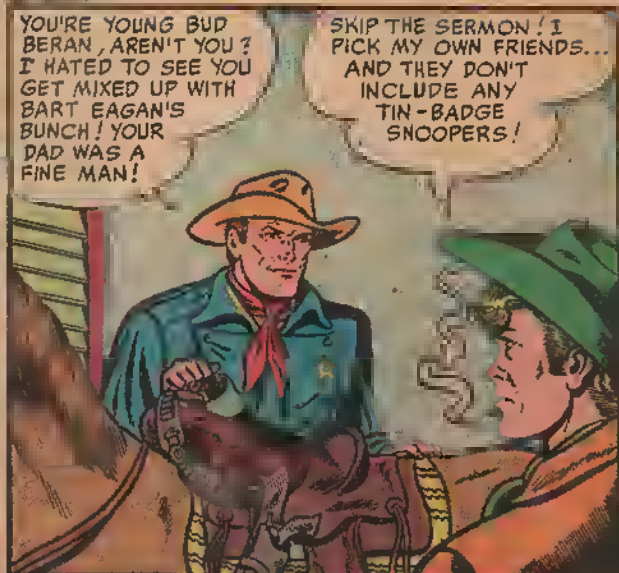


HALT! STAND RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE OR I'LL SHOOT!



CRACK WESTERN





CRACK WESTERN

LET HIM TALK!
WHAT CAN
MARSHAL ALLEN
DO? IF HE TRIES
TO ARREST YOU
HERE, OUTSIDE
HIS TERRITORY,
WE'LL TAKE
THEE OUT HIM!

YOU'RE RIGHT,
BART! MAYBE THIS
IS THE CHANCE
WE'VE BEEN WAIT-
ING FOR, TO GUN
THAT BADGE-
TOTING BUZZARDS
OUT FOR
GOOD!



LATER THAT DAY, IN TOWN...

I'D GUESS
SAM'LL BEGIN
TO COME TO
LATE TONIGHT,
MARSHAL! IF
YOU AIM TO
NAB HIS
ATTACKER,
BOTH ARMS
HANDY!

I'LL NAB HIM,
DOC! SEEMS
TO ME WE
GOT SOME
KIND OF A LAW
IN THIS TOWN
AGAINST
SHOOTING OUR
DRINKERS.



That NIGHT...

WHA...? SOUNDS
LIKE A FULL-FLEDGED
RIOT GOING ON!

GET
HIM! STRING
HIM UP! WE'LL
SHOW THE
DIRTY KILLER!



ALL RIGHT,
FOLKS! WHAT'S
GOING ON
HERE?

WE CAUGHT THIS DIRTY WILD
SPOT RAT IN TOWN, MARSHAL!
HE WAS PROBABLY SNEAKING
BACK TO FINISH SAM OFF
SO HE COULDN'T
TALK!



IT ISN'T TRUE,
MARSHAL! B-BUD
CAME TO VISIT ME!
W-WE'RE IN LOVE!

WELL, NOW, AS I
REMEMBER, WE'VE
GOT NO LAWS
AGAINST YOUNG
FOLKS FALLING
IN LOVE!



HE'S FROM BART
EAGAN'S WILD SPOT!
WE CAUGHT HIM IN
TOWN AND WE AIM
TO STRING HIM UP!

SORRY, BILL, BUT WE
HAVE LAWS AGAINST
LYNCHING! HOW ABOUT
IT, BUD, DO YOU
HAVE AN EXCUSE
FOR BEING
HERE?



SKIP THE GAGS,
MARSHAL! I'M
CAUGHT IN TOWN!
GO AHEAD AND
HAVE ME STRUNG
UP!

DON'T TRY TO BE A DEAD
HERO, BUD! IF YOU CAME
TO TOWN JUST TO SEE
SALLY, I'M NOT THE
ONE TO MAKE A FUSS
ABOUT IT!



NOW STEP ASIDE, MARSHAL! YOU KNOW WHAT THE WILD BUNCH DID TO SAM! THEY'RE ALL THIEVES AND KILLERS AND DESERVE TO HANG!

I'LL AGREE, PETE... WHEN THEY'VE BEEN CONVICTED ON LEGAL EVIDENCE! I'LL HANG ANY ONE OF THEM YOU HELP ME CONVICT LEGALLY!

I TAKE IT THEY'VE NOTHING AGAINST YOU, BUD! TAKE YOUR GUNS AND CLEAR OUT WHILE THEY'RE STILL UNCERTAIN!

YOU... YOU'RE LETTING ME GO, MARSHAL? AFTER THE WAY I SHOT OFF MY MOUTH AT YOU? I WON'T FORGET THIS, ALLEN!



NOW LOOK HERE, MARSHAL! WE'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR...!

MARSHAL, COME QUICK! SAM'S CONSCIOUS AND WANTS TO TELL YOU WHO ROBBED THE BANK AND SHOT HIM!

IT WAS... MATT EAGAN... SHOT ME! SAW HIM... PLAIN AS... DAY!

ALL RIGHT, SAM! TAKE IT EASY! I'LL GO PICK UP MATT AND LOCK HIM UP FOR TRIAL!

MARSHAL, YOU CAN'T GO AFTER MATT EAGAN ALONE! WE'LL GET UP A POSSE AND STORM THE WILD SPOT!

AND GET SOME GOOD MEN KILLED? NO, THANKS! YOU STAY HERE AND I'LL BRING MATT IN FOR TRIAL! THIS IS MY JOB!



TELL ME ONE THING, SALLY... IS BUD REALLY IN LOVE WITH YOU? HAS HE TALKED MARRIAGE?

OH, YES, MARSHAL! HE AIMS TO QUIT THE WILD BUNCH AND SETTLE DOWN TO A RANCH JOB! WE'RE IN LOVE! HE ISN'T REALLY BAD!

THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME! GET A CELL READY FOR MATT, BOYS!

YUH DURN FOOL, MARSHAL! THEY WON'T LET YUH NEAR THE SPOT WITH YORE GUNS... AND WITHOUT 'EM BART EAGAN'LL SLOW YUH DOWN!



A FEW MINUTES LATER---

The WILD SPOT

OKAY, MARSHAL! AND WHERE DO YUH THINK YOU'RE GOING?

INSIDE FOR A TALK, AMIGO! I'M HANGING MY GUNS ON THE SADDLEHORN, SO STOP FEVERING AROUND ABOUT IT!

NOW LOOK, YOU! WE AIN'T TAKIN'...

QUIET! AND LET THOSE GUNS ALONE! BART EAGAN WOULDN'T LIKE A KILLING HE COULDN'T WIGGLE OUT OF!

WELL, LOOK WHO'S HERE! COME TO DO A LITTLE GAMBLING, MARSHAL?

AS A MATTER OF FACT, I DID, BART! I'VE COME TO ARREST YOUR BROTHER, MATT, FOR BANK ROBBERY AND ATTEMPTED MURDER!

ARE YOU JOKING? YOU, WITHOUT A GUN, GONNA ARREST MY BROTHER?

THAT'S RIGHT, BART! SAM WOKE UP AND NAMED MATT AS THE GUN-MAN WHO SHOT HIM DOWN! I'LL SEE THAT HE GETS A FAIR TRIAL!

HAW-HAW-HAW! IF THAT AIN'T RICH, BOYS! OUR UNARMED MARSHAL AIMS TO TAKE MATT IN FOR TRIAL!

HA, HA, BART! THAT'S THE BEST JOKE SINCE OLD ONE-ARM MIKE TRIED TO TAKE OVE YOUR BUNCH!

TOO BAD, MARSHAL, BUT YOU'RE IN A FIX! THE BOYS DON'T LIKE YUH AND YOU'RE IN HERE WITHOUT ANY LEGAL RIGHT!

I SEE, BART! YOU MEAN I CAN BE KILLED AND YOU CAN ALWAYS CLAIM I TRIED TO FORCE MY WAY IN WHERE I HAD NO RIGHT?

YUH CALLED IT, SNOOPER! WE BEEN ITCHIN' FOR A CHANCE TO WIPE YOU OUT AND THIS IS IT! SHALL I PLUG HIM NOW, BART?

WHY NOT? HE COME TO ARREST YOU SO I RECKON YOU GOT A RIGHT TO FIRST SHOT! LET HIM HAVE IT!

CRACK WESTERN

SAY YORE PRAYERS,
BADGE-BUZZARD! THIS
IS YORE FINISH....!

**HOLD
IT....!**

WHA...?
YOU GONE
OFF YOUR
ROCKER,
BUD?

NO! I JUST GOT ONTO IT,
MATT! FUNNY, I GUESS
I BEEN KINDA BLIND
LATELY, NOT TO
RECOGNIZE POLECATS
WHEN I CHUMMED WITH
'EM!

NEVER MIND THE
FOOL KID! PLUG
THE MARSHAL....!

**MARSHAL!
CATCH!**

NO YOU
DON'T,
BUZZARD!

THANKS,
BUD!

BANG!

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST,
MATT... AS I SAID
BEFORE!

YOU'LL
NEVER...
EEEOW!

POW!

POW!

GO ON, MARSHAL! GET
OUT WHILE YUH CAN! I'LL
STAND THEM
OFF!

WE'RE LEAVING
TOGETHER, BUD!
SALLY'S WAITING
FOR YOU IN
TOWN!

BANG!

YOU AIN'T TAKIN'
ME IN!

HEY...!
LOOK
OUT!

CRACK WESTERN

IT'S ALL RIGHT, BUD!
I WAS HOPING FOR
THIS EXCUSE!

GOT YOU,
YUH TWO-
FACED
COYOTE!

LET'S MAKE THIS A
CLEAN SWEEP, BUD...
SO NO MORE YOUNG
FELLOWS GET LED
INTO WRONG PATHS!



YOU DID IT, MARSHAL! THAT'LL
BE THE END OF BART EAGAN
AND HIS BUNCH! WITH
MATT EAGAN IN JAIL,
HIS POWER IS GONE!

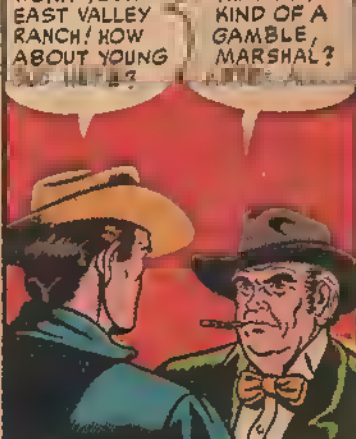
AND
YOU'RE
FREE TO START A
NEW LIFE WITH
SALLY, BUD!

YUH GOT MATT
EAGAN... AND
THAT GUN-SLICK
KID, TOO!

LAY OFF BUD
BERAN! WITHOUT
HIM I'D BE DEAD
NOW AND BART
EAGAN WOULD
BE TELLING YOU
ALL WHERE TO
GET OFF!

DAVE, YOU'VE
BEEN WANTING
A BRIGHT YOUNG
FELLOW TO
WORK YOUR
EAST VALLEY
RANCH! HOW
ABOUT YOUNG
BUD HERE?

BUD? WELL
... AH...
HARRUMPH!
WOULDN'T
THAT BE A
KIND OF A
GAMBLE,
MARSHAL?



ARE YOU WORRIED,
DAVE? I GAMBLER
MY LIFE ON BUD'S
DECENCY WHEN I
WENT IN THERE
WITHOUT MY GUNS!
I FELT SURE HE'D
SIDE WITH ME!

WELL... THEN I
RECKON I CAN GAMBLE
A FEW HEAD OF STOCK!
BUD, THE JOB IS
YOURS!

MARSHAL, I'M
GLAD YOU DON'T
DROP IN TO GAMBLE
AT MY DEUCE-TRAY
SALOON! WITH YOUR
LUCK YOU'D BREAK
ME IN A WEEK!

I'LL TELL YOU A SECRET,
JACK... WHEN YOU GAMBLE
ON HUMAN DECENCY
YOU'RE USUALLY
GAMBLING ON A
SURE THING! I
NEVER LOSE!



Cactus Pete's Gold

THE sun was setting over the mountains as Tex Larson rode into Canyon Creek, and the gold and purple sky added warmth to the countryside. A flush of warmth and inner satisfaction rushed through him, too!

"This may be the end of a long trail of wandering," he thought. "I hope so!"

Canyon Creek was a small cow town and its wide street generally was empty except for a few pintos or buckskins tied to the hitching posts. But, this day, it was buzzing with activity. Tex noticed the covered wagons, stage coaches, and buckboards. He saw that there were dozens of ponies and plenty of people, including cowhands and Indians and pretty girls dressed in their best. He glanced upward, to the canvas banner that bridged the street. It read:

CARSON'S RODEO July 12-19

"Carson's Rodeo. That's for me!" thought Tex. "All my life, I've wanted to be in a rodeo!"

He had been in this part of the country before, working as a ranch hand, but he was a mover—couldn't stay long in one place. This time, he had come up from Texas riding the bag-line, stopping from ranch to ranch and living on Western hospitality. It was lucky that he had hit the Double Z ranch the night before and met Jim Powers. Jim had offered him a job with the rodeo. Now he could keep on the move and still belong to something. It was a good feeling.

Tex reined in his white mustang in front of the Four Deuces Bar and jumped from the saddle.

"Easy, Buck," he said, giving the horse a gentle pat. "You wait here while I check in with Powers. Make out right and we'll be sure of a good feed-bag from now on."

He looped the reins to the wrack and sauntered through the swinging doors into the saloon. It was filled. The bar was lined with cowpokes, most of them doubtless with the rodeo. Men sat at the tables, some playing cards and others drinking and watching. Obviously, they were not all Westerners, but a rodeo always attracted a motley crowd. A player piano was pouring out a discordant tune from someplace in back. Tex couldn't see through the heavy haze of smoke.

"Stuffy," he thought. "Better not let it get me or they'll think I'm a tenderfoot."

Just inside, a big knobby-faced man with high leather boots and jangling spurs pushed his way through the crowd and extended a huge gnarled but friendly hand to Tex. It was Jim Powers.

"Been lookin' for you, fella," he said heartily. "Come and meet some of the boys."

He ushered Tex down the line. "This is Spud Diehl . . . and Sam Benson . . . and Sagebrush Dugan . . . and——"

It went on and on. Tex shook hands until his fingers ached. "Glad ta meetcha," they said. And, "Hear you're joinin' up." And, "From Texas, huh? I'd shore like ta roam that old Texas range again."

Tex liked them. "Good hombres," he thought. "All kinda like a family—something I never had."

Jim motioned toward the end of the bar. "One more you gotta meet," he told Tex, "an' that's old Cactus Pete. A real old-timer and the best rawhide of the lot."

Cactus Pete leaned heavily on the bar, his back bent with the weight of years and his long gray hair and grizzly beard almost covering his face.

"Hey, Cactus Pete," said Powers, nudging the old man on the shoulder, "meet the new man, Tex Larson."

"New man, huh? Howdy, lad. Glad ta know ya. Ya shore hitched up with a good bunch o' boys here! Ain't never been no better."

"I'm sure of that," said Tex with a grin, as he took the old man's hand. "I like 'em all and I've always wanted to go with a rodeo."

Somebody motioned for Jim Powers, so he left Tex with Cactus Pete. And Tex knew he was meeting the acid test, for through the frame of wrinkles and the shaggy brows, the old fellow's eyes were fixed upon him and looking him over as carefully as if he had been appraising a horse. Tex had begun to feel uneasy when the eyes narrowed and began to twinkle and Cactus Pete patted him on the back.

"I like you," he said. "Now, about this rodeo—I been with it nigh onto twenty years. Fore that, I was a scout an' a fair t'middlin' rider, if I do say it m'self. I don't ride no more—too old—but I gotta go along now ta take care o' my boys. Gotta look after 'em. See?"

"Sure, I see." Tex nodded. "That's swell!"

"Yep, gotta watch over 'em," Cactus Pete repeated. "Gotta see they make out. Me—I aint got no worries."

He looked about him and then pulled a small bag from his hip pocket. He put a bony finger to his withered lips to indicate that he was letting Tex in on a deep secret—then he dumped the contents of the bag on the bar. Tex stared.

"Know what them are, boy? Huh? Ever see things like them afore?"

"Nuggets," answered Tex. "Gold nuggets! I never saw any that big!"

"Biggest nuggets ya ever saw, ain't they? Come from my mine up in Montana. Here's a map," and he pulled a roll of paper from his other hip pocket. "Here's a map, showin' how ta get ta my mine. Lots o' nuggets there, boy, bigger'n these. Some day I'm goin' back and dig fer 'em."

The men at the bar paid little attention as Cactus Pete told Tex his story. Maybe one or two watched and smiled. But at a table in back, two men drank and stared.

"Hey, Duke," said one, "did you hear that? Think it's on the level?"

"You saw the nuggets, didn't you, Rocky? See how they sparkled? It's not clay."

"Duke, are you thinkin' what I am? We gotta hide out from the law. Any better place than in the mountains of Montana?"

"Can't name it. While the cops cool off back East, we can be diggin' gold in the West. Not bad."

Jim Powers ordered the rodeo riders to break up and hit the hay early since they had to be in top shape for the opening day. He left, too, but not before he had told Tex where to bed down his horse and find a bunk for himself. Old Cactus Pete hobbled down the street alone. The others had learned long before, to let him take his time!

Tex had untied Buck's reins and was about to hop into the saddle when he heard a wail from the shadows beyond. It was followed by a string of curses, such as only an old sourdough like Cactus Pete could have known. Still holding the reins, Tex ran down the street and found the old man, shaking his fist and bellowing like an injured animal.

"My gold! Two consarned critters took my map and my gold!"

"Don't worry, pappy," shouted Tex, as he flung himself across the saddle. "I'll get 'em back for you if it takes a year!"

Galloping around the corner, Tex saw two figures running away in the darkness. He called for them to stop but the only answer was the whine of a bullet that barely missed his hat. He leaped to the ground and began the chase.

"Anybody'd have to be rotten clear through," he thought, "to steal from that old man."

Another bullet came close and cut the air beside him. Tex was quick on the trigger and he was close enough now to see his target. A shot rang out, then a piercing cry, and he saw that he had disarmed one of his opponents. He flung himself at the other, grabbing him around the knees and tossing him into the air so that the aim of the .45 went wild. Tex grabbed the Colt and threw it as far as he could.

The battle that followed was a slug-fest. Tex fought both men, his fists fast and his punches well planted. The commotion was attracting a crowd but, by the time the sheriff and Jim Powers and the rodeo wranglers got there, the culprits had been well beaten and had given up to the tall cowboy who seemed to have eyes in the back of his head and a dozen arms that whirled like windmills. Tex took the map and the gold. And the sheriff took Duke and Rocky, the two fugitives from justice, into custody.

There were tears of gratitude in old Cactus Pete's eyes, as he fondled his precious possessions. "Bless ya, boy," he said, and sniffed and walked away.

Big Jim Powers took Tex aside and laid the hard, calloused hand on his shoulder. "I'm sorry about this," he explained. "Too bad you went to all that trouble for nothin'."

Tex looked puzzled. "What do you mean?"

"Well," Jim explained, "you see, we bring Cactus Pete along just to look after him! The old gent looked for gold all his life and never found it, so last summer some of the boys cooked up a scheme!"

"Scheme?" Tex still didn't understand.

"Planted phony nuggets around," Jim continued, "—fool's gold! He thought he'd struck pay dirt! Says he's goin' back to open that mine but we know he'll never make it." The big man was silent a minute, then he added, "So you risked your life for nothin'!"

"It wasn't for nothing," Tex answered, "if that's what keeps him happy."

Jim Powers gave him a pat on the back. Tex knew, then, that he was "in." He had found a place in life, at last. He had come to the end of the lonely trail.

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Arizona Raines



AS ARIZONA RAINES AND HIS PARTNER, SPURS, RIDE INTO THE TOWN OF LOS PADRES!

EVERY HOMBRE IN TOWN KNEW WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE LOS PADRES STAGE! AMBUSHED BY SCALP-HUNGRY INDIANS... AND NO ONE LEFT TO TELL ITS TALE OF HORROR!

BUT ARIZONA RAINES WANTED TO KNOW WHY THE LOS PADRES STAGE STILL ROLLED INTO TOWN, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, WITH ITS GHOSTLY WHEELS CLATTERING, AND WITH ITS MURDERED OCCUPANTS STILL PEERING FROM THE WINDOWS OF

THE
**PHANTOM
STAGECOACH!**

SHORE IS MIGHTY QUIET, ARIZONA!

RECKON PEOPLE GRAB THEIR SHUTEYE EARLY IN THESE PARTS!



HUH? WHO'S THAT?

TAKE COVER, YOU DANGED FOOLS! AFORE IT'S TOO LATE!



HE SOUNDED MIGHTY URGENT, WHOEVER IT WAS!
RECKON WE'LL FOLLOW HIS ADVICE--AND ASK
QUESTIONS LATER!



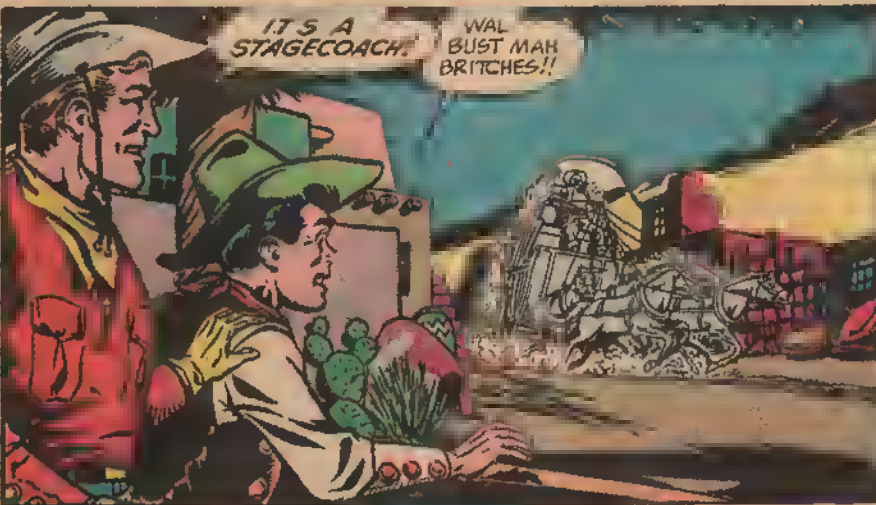
I DON'T LIKE HIDIN' FROM
NOTHIN' AT ALL!
WHY SHOULD...?



QUIET, SPURS! I
HEAR THE SOUND
OF WHEELS!

IT'S A
STAGECOACH.

WAL
BUST MAH
BRITCHES!!



SHORE IS ALL
FIRED PECULIAR
LOOKIN' NEVER
SAW A STAGE
ALL DONE UP
IN WHITE
THATAWAY!

WHY IS IT
RIDING INTO
TOWN AT
THIS HOUR?



LOOK! IT STOPPED IN
FRONT OF THAT HOUSE
DOWN THE STREET!



THE DRIVER GOT DOWN! HE'S
OPENING THE STAGE DOOR
FOR SOMEBODY TO GET
OUT!

MEBBE WE
OUGHTN'T TUH
GO ANY CLOSER,
ARIZONA! I GOT A
QUEER FEELING
ABOUT THE
COACH!



SOMEBODY
INSIDE THE HOUSE
IS SHOOTING AT
THEM! C'MON!



GULP! I HEARD THE SHOOTIN, TOO ARIZONA! BUT I DIDN'T SEE ANY FOLKS FROM THET STAGECOACH FALL DOWN!

STOP THEM!

DON'T INTERFERE, STRANGER! YUH CAN'T DO ANYTHIN' TUH STOP GHOSTS!

LEGGO OF ME!

MEBBE YOU MEAN WELL... AND MEBBE YOU DON'T! BUT I NEVER LET HOMBRES MAN-HANDLE ME!

WHAT MY PARDNER SAYS GOES FER ME, TOO!

TOO LATE! THEY DELAYED US LONG ENOUGH FER THE STAGE TO GET AWAY!

LUCKY FER YOU WE DID, STRANGER!

THAT WAS THE LOS PADRES STAGE -- THE SAME ONE THAT WAS AMBUSHED BY INJUNS THREE WEEKS AGO! THE DRIVER AND BOTH PASSENGERS WERE KILLED!

HUH? YOU MEAN WE WERE SEEIN' GHOSTS!

I KNOW IT'S PLUMB HARD TUH BELIEVE! BUT PLENTY OF FOLKS HAVE IDENTIFIED THE DRIVER, AND THE GAL AND HER BROTHER WHO WERE PASSENGERS!

GULP! THET EXPLAIN WHY THOSE SHOTS DIDN'T FAZE 'EM!

CRACK! WESTERN

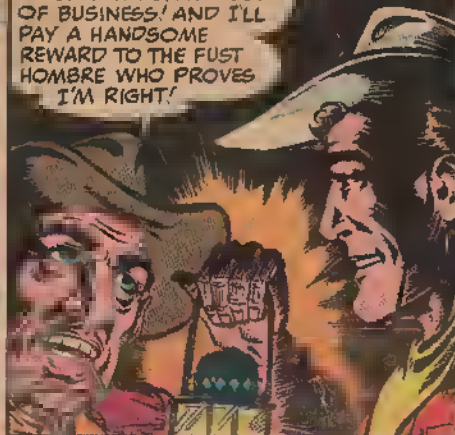
YUH CAN'T
HURT GHOSTS
WITH
BULLETS!

THAT'S LOCO TALK! I
FIRED THOSE SHOTS AND
I'M SHORE I WINGED ONE
OF THE VARMINTS! THAT
PROVES THEY AIN'T GHOSTS
RIDING THAT STAGECOACH!



MY NAME'S KEM RANDALL,
AND I OWN THE STAGE-
COACH LINE! THAT
PHANTOM STAGE IS
JUST SOME ORNERY
TRICK TUH RUN ME OUT
OF BUSINESS! AND I'LL
PAY A HANDSOME
REWARD TO THE FUST
HOMBRE WHO PROVES
I'M RIGHT!

RECKON WE'LL
TAKE THAT JOB,
MR. RANDALL!



SOON...

IF RANDALL IS
SO DOGGONE
SHORE WE
AIN'T CHASIN'
GHOSTS, WHY
DOESN'T HE
HUNT FER
THEM
HIMSELF?

HES A BADLY
SCARED HOMBRE
THE WAY HE
OPENED FIRE
ON THAT
STAGECOACH
PROVES HES
ON THE POINT
OF CRACKIN'
UP!



'MEBBE WE ARE TRAILIN' GHOSTS,
ARIZONA! THE MARK OF
STAGECOACH
WHEELS ENDS
HERE!

I'M MORE INTERESTED IN
THIS POWDERED CHALK!
IT PROVES WE'RE *NOT* RIDING
A PHANTOM'S TRAIL!



MOMENTS
LATER...

YORE RIGHT ARIZONA!
THAT'S THE PHANTOM
STAGE! BUT HOW'D
YOU KNOW WHERE
TO FIND IT?

THEY RODE OVER
HARD SHALE TO
MAKE SHORE THEY
LEFT NO TRACKS! I JUST
FOLLOWED THE SHALE BED
...AND THE TRACKS OF
POWDERED CHALK!



YOU SEE SPURS? THEY
COVERED THEMSELVES
AND THE STAGE WITH
POWDERED CHALK TO
MAKE THEM LOOK LIKE
GHOSTS!

SOME VARMINTS
HAVE FOUND US!
I'LL BLAST...



EEEOW!

I DON'T LIKE TO SETTLE
MATTERS WITH GUNS!
THIS WAY IS SO MUCH
EASIER!



NOW, MA'AM, DON'T GO GUN-LOCO!

THANKS, SPURS! SHE'S DESPERATE ENOUGH TO USE THAT GUN!



I-I WOULDN'T HAVE SHOT YOU! I COULDN'T KILL ANYONE--EVEN IF IT MEANS THE RUIN OF OUR PLANS!

I BELIEVE YOU, MISS! BUT SUPPOSE YOU TELL ME THE MEANING OF ALL THIS!



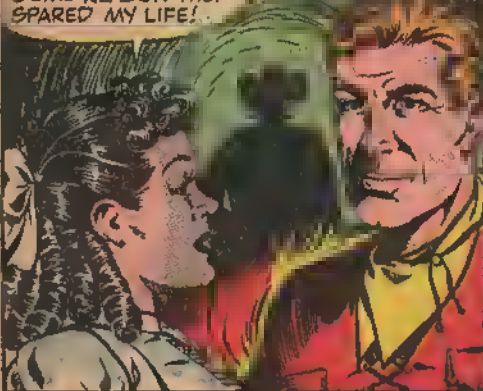
MY NAME IS LUCY MONTAIN! I-I WAS ABOARD THE LOS PADRES STAGE WHEN IT WAS AMBUSHED BY INDIANS! THEY KILLED THE DRIVER AND MY BROTHER, BUT FOR SOME REASON THEY SPARED MY LIFE!

RECKON SOME INDIAN CHIEF TOOK A FANCY TO YOU!

THEY KEPT ME PRISONER IN THEIR VILLAGE FOR A WEEK! THERE I LEARNED THAT THE RAID HAD BEEN PLANNED BY KEM RANDALL HIMSELF! HE SPLITS THE LOOT WITH THE INDIANS...AND COLLECTS IN FULL FROM THE INSURANCE COMPANY!

WHY, THET LOW DOWN MURDERIN' RATTLE-SNAKE!

FINALLY, I MANAGED TO ESCAPE! BUT I STILL COULDN'T PROVE KEM RANDALL WAS THE VARMINT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INDIAN RAID THAT HAD KILLED MY BROTHER!



SO I HIT ON THIS SCHEME TO FRIGHTEN HIM INTO A CONFESSION! I HAD A STAGECOACH BUILT TO RESEMBLE THE LOS PADRES STAGE.. AND PERSUADED TWO FRIENDS TO PLAY THE PARTS OF THE TWO MURDERED MEN!

EVERY NIGHT WE RODE INTO TOWN AND STOPPED IN FRONT OF KEM RANDALL'S HOUSE! WHEN HE STARTED SHOOTING TONIGHT, I WAS SURE HE WAS READY TO CRACK...

RECKON YOU WERENT FAR WRONG! ONE OF YOUR FRIENDS GOT WOUNDED IN THE FRACAS.. BUT I'VE ALWAYS HANKERED TO BE AN ACTOR MYSELF!



The following evening...

YOU-YOU MEAN YOU WANT TO HELP ME?

THAT'S RIGHT, MISS! AND THIS TIME WE'RE GONNA *PROVE* TO KEM RANDALL THAT HE'S DEALIN' WITH GHOSTS!

THAT PHANTOM STAGECOACH WON'T COME BACK TONIGHT! I FOUND OUT THE NAME OF THAT BIG COWPOKE WHO WENT AFTER IT! HE'S ARIZONA RAINES...

HE'S GOT A REP AS THE BEST GUN-WADDY IN THE WEST! THAR AIN'T NO GHOSTS COULD FRIGHTEN HIM...

SULP! WHO'S THAR?

IT'S ME! RECKON I'VE GOT BAD NEWS FER YUH!

ME'N ARIZONA TRACKED DOWN THAT PHANTOM STAGECOACH! WE SAW IT JEST FADE AWAY INTO THIN AIR!

WHAT? I-I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

IT'S TRUE, JEST THE SAME! ARIZONA WENT PLUMB LOCO WHEN HE SAW IT HAPPEN! HE RODE AFTER IT--AND THET'S THE LAST I SAW OF HIM!

IT--IT CAN'T BE! THAR AIN'T ANY SECH THING AS GHOSTS! EVERYBODY KNOWS THET!

WHUT'S THAT? I-I HEARD A NOISE!

SOUNDED LIKE WHEELS TO ME, MISTER RANDALL! I RECKON THAT PHANTOM STAGE IS COMIN' BACK!

THIS TIME IT MAY BE COMIN' TUH GET YOU!

IT--IT'S A FAKE! IT'S GOT TO BE! A COUPLE OF LEAD BULLETS WILL PUT AN END TO ALL THIS JABBER ABOUT PHANTOMS!